

# Revelation

**Summary:** *Revelation 1 opens with a prologue identifying the work as a revelation from God, given through Jesus Christ to his servant John. A blessing is pronounced on those who read and heed its words. John then addresses seven churches in the province of Asia with a greeting of grace and peace. He describes being 'in the Spirit' on the Lord's day on the island of Patmos, where he hears a loud voice commanding him to write what he sees and send it to the seven churches. Turning, he sees a vision of the glorified Christ standing among seven golden lampstands — a figure with white hair, blazing eyes, feet like burnished bronze, and a voice like rushing waters, holding seven stars in his right hand with a sharp two-edged sword coming from his mouth. John falls at his feet as though dead, but Christ lays his right hand on him and identifies himself as 'the first and the last, the living one' who holds the keys of death and Hades.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The opening vision draws heavily on Daniel 7:9-14 (the Ancient of Days and Son of Man), Daniel 10:5-6 (the angelic figure), and Ezekiel 1:24-28 (the throne vision). The description of Christ merges attributes that Daniel assigns to both the Ancient of Days (white hair) and the Son of Man (glory, dominion), making a striking theological claim about Christ's identity. The seven lampstands echo Zechariah 4:2. The 'sharp two-edged sword' from his mouth alludes to Isaiah 49:2 and anticipates the word-as-weapon imagery throughout Revelation. The self-designation 'the Alpha and the Omega' uses the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet to express totality and sovereignty.*

**Translation Friction:** *The Greek apokalypsis ('unveiling, revelation') gives the book its name and its genre designation. We render the apocalyptic imagery as written without attempting to decode symbols into modern equivalents — the text presents visions, and we translate them as visions. The phrase en pneumati ('in the Spirit') in verse 10 could mean 'in a state of spiritual ecstasy' or 'by the agency of the Spirit'; we preserve the ambiguity. Some textual variants exist in the doxology of verses 5-6; we follow the SBLGNT reading.*

**Connections:** *Daniel 7:9-14 (Son of Man, Ancient of Days), Daniel 10:5-6 (angelic figure description), Ezekiel 1:24-28 (throne theophany), Zechariah 4:2 (seven lampstands), Isaiah 49:2 (sword from mouth), Isaiah 44:6 (first and last). The greeting formula in verses 4-5 echoes the covenant name of God from Exodus 3:14. The 'seven spirits before his throne' may allude to Isaiah 11:2 or Zechariah 4:2-10.*

<sup>1</sup>The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, <sup>2</sup>Who bare record of the message of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he noticed. <sup>3</sup>Blessed is the one who reads aloud, and blessed are those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep what is written in it, for the time is near. <sup>4</sup>John, to the seven churches in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, <sup>5</sup>From Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the initially brought into the world of the no longer alive, and the prince of the kings of the age. To him that loved us, and washed us from our wrongdoings in his own blood,. <sup>6</sup>Has fashioned us kings and priests to God and his Parent. To him be splendor and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. <sup>7</sup>Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him. Yes, amen. <sup>8</sup>"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." <sup>9</sup>I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation, the kingdom, and the endurance that are in Jesus — I was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. <sup>10</sup>I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, <sup>11</sup>Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last — and, What you seest, write in a book, and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia. To Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea. <sup>12</sup>I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, <sup>13</sup>Among the lampstands stood someone who looked like the Son of Man. He was dressed in a long robe and wore a golden sash across his chest. <sup>14</sup>His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow, and his eyes were like a flame of fire. <sup>15</sup>His feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters. <sup>16</sup>In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining at full strength. <sup>17</sup>When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me and said, "Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last, <sup>18</sup>Indeed, I am he that liveth, and was dead. And, take notice, I am alive for evermore, Amen. And have the keys of hell and of death. <sup>19</sup>Therefore write what you have seen, what is now, and what will take place after this. <sup>20</sup>As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches."

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The Greek apokalypsis means 'unveiling' or 'disclosure' — the removal of a covering to reveal what was hidden. This is not merely a prediction of the future but a disclosure of heavenly realities. The phrase en tachei ('in quickness/soon') can mean 'soon' or 'swiftly when it begins'; the temporal ambiguity is inherent in the Greek. The verb esēmanen ('made known, signified') shares a root with sēmeion ('sign'), suggesting that the revelation communicates through signs and symbols rather than plain speech.
2. The Greek emartyrēsen ('testified, bore witness') and martyrian ('testimony') share the root martyr-, connecting witness with suffering — a theme that pervades Revelation. John's role is as a witness who reports what he has seen, not as an interpreter who explains it.
3. This is the first of seven beatitudes in Revelation (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14). The singular 'the one who reads aloud' (ho anaginōskōn) and the plural 'those who hear' (hoi akouontes) reflect the practice of public reading in early Christian assemblies — one reader, many listeners. The Greek kairos ('time, appointed season') differs from chronos ('clock time'); kairos suggests a decisive moment, not merely a date.
4. The phrase ho ōn kai ho ēn kai ho erchomenos ('the one who is and who was and who is coming') is a deliberate expansion of the divine name revealed in Exodus 3:14. The Greek grammar is intentionally broken — apo ('from') should govern a genitive, but ho ōn is nominative, as if the divine name resists grammatical subordination. The 'seven spirits' may refer to the Holy Spirit in sevenfold fullness (cf. Isaiah 11:2) or to seven angelic beings before God's throne (cf. Zechariah 4:2-10); we render the phrase as written without deciding between interpretations.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Exodus 3:14. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 11:2. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Zechariah 4:2-10. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
5. Three titles are given to Christ: 'faithful witness' (ho martys ho pistos), 'firstborn from the dead' (ho prōtotokos tōn nekrōn), and 'ruler of the kings of the earth' (ho archōn tōn basileōn tēs gēs). The third title echoes Psalm 89:27, where God promises David's heir will be 'the highest of the kings of the earth.' The SBLGNT reads lysanti ('freed, released') rather than the variant lousanti ('washed'), which changes the metaphor from washing to liberation. We follow the SBLGNT. The present participle agapōnti ('who loves') indicates ongoing love, while the aorist lysanti ('freed') points to a completed act.

5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Psalm 89:27 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
6. The Greek *basileian, hierais* ('a kingdom, priests') echoes Exodus 19:6, where Israel is called 'a kingdom of priests.' The singular 'kingdom' (not 'kings') with the apposition 'priests' is the SBLGNT reading — the community collectively forms a kingdom, and each member serves as a priest. This democratization of priestly identity is a major theme in Revelation. The doxology *eis tous aiōnas tōn aiōnōn* ('into the ages of the ages') is the strongest Greek expression of endlessness.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Exodus 19:6. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. This verse fuses two Old Testament passages: Daniel 7:13 ('one like a son of man coming with the clouds') and Zechariah 12:10 ('they will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn'). The combination identifies the pierced one of Zechariah with Daniel's Son of Man — a connection with profound christological implications. The verb *exekentēsan* ('pierced') is the same word the Fourth Gospel applies to Christ's crucifixion (John 19:37). The closing *nai, amēn* pairs a Greek affirmation with a Hebrew one, bridging both linguistic worlds.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Zechariah 12:10. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Daniel 7:13. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, expressing totality — God encompasses all reality from beginning to end. This echoes Isaiah 44:6 ('I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God'). The title *pantokratōr* ('Almighty, ruler of all') translates the Hebrew *Shaddai* and occurs nine times in Revelation — more than in the rest of the New Testament combined. The threefold temporal description repeats from verse 4.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 44:6 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
9. John identifies himself not with a title of authority but as 'brother' and 'partner' (*synkoinōnos, 'co-sharer'*). Three things are shared: tribulation (*thlipsis*), kingdom (*basileia*), and endurance (*hypomonē*) — all bound together 'in Jesus.' Patmos is a small island in the Aegean Sea, traditionally understood as a place of exile. The phrase *dia ton logon* ('because of the word') could mean John was exiled for preaching or that he went to Patmos to receive the word; the traditional reading of exile is more likely given the context of tribulation.
10. The phrase *en pneumati* ('in the Spirit') describes a state of prophetic vision or ecstasy — John is transported beyond ordinary perception. This phrase recurs at key structural points in Revelation (4:2; 17:3; 21:10). The 'Lord's day' (*tē kyriakē hēmera*) is the earliest extra-biblical reference to Sunday as a distinctive day for Christians. The trumpet voice echoes Exodus 19:16, where a trumpet blast accompanies God's appearance at Sinai.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Exodus 19:16 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
11. The SBLGNT does not include 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last' in this verse, which appears in some later manuscripts (reflected in the KJV). We follow the critical text. The Greek *biblion* ('scroll, book') refers to a papyrus scroll, not a codex. The seven churches are listed in geographical order, forming a rough circuit through the province of Asia (western modern Turkey), beginning with Ephesus, the largest city and nearest to Patmos.
12. The synesthetic phrase 'see the voice' (*blepein tēn phōnēn*) is striking — John turns to see a sound. This conflation of senses reflects the overwhelming nature of visionary experience. The seven golden lampstands (*lychnias chrysas*) recall the menorah of the tabernacle (Exodus 25:31-37) and Zechariah's vision of a golden lampstand with seven lights (Zechariah 4:2). Verse 20 will identify the lampstands as the seven churches.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Exodus 25:31-37. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Zechariah 4:2. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
13. The phrase *homoion huion anthrōpou* ('one like a son of man') directly echoes Daniel 7:13 (LXX), where one 'like a son of man' approaches the Ancient of Days and receives dominion. The long robe (*podērē*) is the garment of a priest (Exodus 28:4; Ezekiel 9:2), and the golden sash (*zōnēn chrysan*) also suggests priestly or royal authority. The description that follows will merge attributes of Daniel's Ancient of Days with the Son of Man figure, making a claim about Christ's divine identity.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Daniel 7:13 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Exodus 28:4 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.

13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Ezekiel 9:2 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
14. The white hair is drawn from Daniel 7:9, where it describes the Ancient of Days — not the Son of Man. By applying this attribute to the risen Christ, Revelation makes a bold identification: the Son of Man shares the characteristics of the eternal God. The fiery eyes echo Daniel 10:6, where they describe an angelic or divine figure. Each element of this vision is drawn from Old Testament theophany and reassigned to Christ.
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Daniel 7:9. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Daniel 10:6. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
15. The Greek *chalkolibanō* is a rare word, possibly a copper-zinc alloy or orichalcum — the exact metal is uncertain. 'Burnished bronze' captures the sense of a glowing, refined metal. The 'sound of many waters' echoes Ezekiel 1:24 and 43:2, where it describes the voice of God himself. Daniel 10:6 similarly describes an angelic figure with bronze limbs and a powerful voice. The cumulative effect is of overwhelming divine majesty.
15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Ezekiel 1:24 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Daniel 10:6 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
16. The seven stars are identified in verse 20 as the angels of the seven churches. The two-edged sword (*rhomphaia distomos oxeia*) proceeding from his mouth alludes to Isaiah 49:2 ('He made my mouth like a sharp sword') and represents the power of Christ's word to judge and divide. The image is not of a physical weapon but of divine speech that cuts. His face shining like the sun recalls the transfiguration (Matthew 17:2) and the angel of Daniel 10:6, as well as the radiance of Moses's face after encountering God (Exodus 34:29-30).
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 49:2. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Daniel 10:6. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Exodus 34:29-30. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
17. Falling 'as though dead' (*hōs nekros*) is the typical human response to a divine encounter (cf. Daniel 8:17-18; 10:8-9; Ezekiel 1:28). The reassuring touch and 'do not be afraid' also follow the pattern of Daniel 10:10-12. 'The first and the last' (*ho prōtos kai ho eschatos*) is a direct claim to the title God applies to himself in Isaiah 44:6 and 48:12. Christ applies to himself the exclusive self-designation of YHWH.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Daniel 8:17-18. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Ezekiel 1:28. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Daniel 10:10-12. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 44:6. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
18. The self-identification moves from eternal existence ('the first and the last') to incarnate death ('I was dead') to resurrection ('I am alive forever and ever') — the entire gospel compressed into a single sentence. The 'keys of death and Hades' (*tas kleis tou thanatou kai tou hadou*) represent authority over the realm of the dead. Hades (*hadēs*) is the Greek equivalent of Hebrew Sheol — the abode of the dead, not the later Christian concept of hell as a place of punishment. Christ's possession of these keys means death no longer operates as a final, unopposed power.
19. This verse provides a threefold outline that many interpreters use to structure the entire book: 'what you have seen' (the vision of chapter 1), 'what is now' (the situation of the seven churches in chapters 2-3), and 'what will take place after this' (the visions of chapters 4-22). Whether or not John intended this as a formal outline, the three temporal categories — past vision, present reality, future events — frame the entire work.
20. The Greek *mystērion* ('mystery') does not mean 'puzzle' but 'revealed secret' — something previously hidden that is now disclosed. Christ himself provides the interpretation of the vision's symbols, establishing a pattern for the rest of the book where some symbols are explained and others are left for the reader. The identity of the 'angels' (*angeloi*) of the churches is debated: they may be heavenly guardians, human leaders (the Greek *angelos* can mean 'messenger'), or the spiritual identity of each congregation. The text does not resolve this ambiguity.

## 2

**Summary:** *Revelation 2 contains four of the seven letters to the churches of Asia: Ephesus (vv. 1-7), Smyrna (vv. 8-11), Pergamum (vv. 12-17), and Thyatira (vv. 18-29). Each letter follows a consistent pattern: an address identifying Christ by a feature from the chapter 1 vision, a commendation ('I know your works'), a criticism or encouragement, a command, and a promise 'to the one who conquers.' Ephesus is praised for endurance but has abandoned its first love. Smyrna faces suffering and is told to be faithful unto death. Pergamum holds fast to Christ's name but tolerates false teaching. Thyatira is commended for love and service but rebuked for tolerating a false prophetess.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *Each letter begins with a self-description of Christ drawn from the vision of 1:12-20, creating a direct literary connection. The promises to the conqueror in each letter anticipate the final vision of the new creation in chapters 21-22 (tree of life, no second death, hidden manna, morning star). The reference to 'the synagogue of Satan' (2:9) reflects a sharp conflict between the early church and local Jewish communities over claims to be the true people of God. The 'Nicolaitans' and the teaching of 'Balaam' appear to involve compromise with Greco-Roman religious culture, particularly eating food offered to idols and sexual immorality.*

**Translation Friction:** *The phrase 'synagogue of Satan' (2:9) is historically specific to a first-century dispute and must not be generalized; we render it as written. 'Jezebel' in the Thyatira letter (2:20) is likely a symbolic name drawn from the Old Testament figure, not a literal name; we note the allusion. The precise identity of the Nicolaitans is uncertain; we render the name without speculative identification.*

**Connections:** *Ephesus: Genesis 2:9 and Revelation 22:2 (tree of life). Smyrna: Daniel 1:12-14 (testing period). Pergamum: Numbers 22-25 (Balaam), Numbers 25:1-2 (eating sacrifices, sexual immorality), Exodus 16:33-34 (hidden manna), Isaiah 62:2 (new name). Thyatira: 1 Kings 16:31, 21:25 (Jezebel), Psalm 2:8-9 (ruling nations with iron rod), Isaiah 14:12 (morning star).*

<sup>1</sup>To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands: <sup>2</sup>"I know your works, your labor and your endurance, and that you cannot tolerate evil people. You have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and you have found them to be false. <sup>3</sup>You have endurance, and you have borne up for the sake of my name, and you have not grown weary. <sup>4</sup>But I have this against you: you have abandoned the love you had at first. <sup>5</sup>Remember then how far you have fallen. Repent, and do the works you did at first. If you do not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place — unless you repent. <sup>6</sup>But you do have this: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. <sup>7</sup>Let the one who has an ear hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers, I will grant the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." <sup>8</sup>To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of the first and the last, who was dead and came to life: <sup>9</sup>"I know your tribulation and your poverty — but you are rich — and the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. <sup>10</sup>Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Look, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison so that you may be tested, and you will face tribulation for ten days. Be faithful even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. <sup>11</sup>Let the one who has an ear hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be harmed by the second death." <sup>12</sup>To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of the one who has the sharp two-edged sword: <sup>13</sup>"I know where you dwell — where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast to my name, and you did not deny your faith in me even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. <sup>14</sup>But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they would eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. <sup>15</sup>In the same way, you also have some who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. <sup>16</sup>Therefore repent. If you do not, I will come to you soon and wage war against them with the sword of my mouth. <sup>17</sup>Let the one who has an ear hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers, I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written that no one knows except the one who receives it." <sup>18</sup>To the angel of the church in Thyatira

write: These are the words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire and feet like burnished bronze: <sup>19</sup>"I know your works — your love, faith, service, and endurance — and that your last works are greater than your first. <sup>20</sup>But I have this against you: you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and teaches and deceives my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. <sup>21</sup>I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. <sup>22</sup>Look, I will throw her onto a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works. <sup>23</sup>I will strike her children dead, and all the churches will know that I am the one who searches minds and hearts, and I will give to each of you according to your works. <sup>24</sup>But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known what they call 'the deep things of Satan' — I place no other burden on you. <sup>25</sup>Only hold fast to what you have until I come. <sup>26</sup>The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end — to that one I will give authority over the nations, <sup>27</sup>He will rule them with a rod of iron. As the vessels of a potter will they be broken to shivers:. <sup>28</sup>Indeed as I received of my Father. And I will provide him the morning star. <sup>29</sup>Let the one who has an ear hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The formula *tade legei* ('these things says') echoes the prophetic messenger formula of the Old Testament ('thus says the LORD'). Christ's self-identification draws from 1:13 and 1:16. The verb *peripatōn* ('walking') implies active presence — Christ is not distant from his churches but moves among them. Ephesus was the largest and most prominent city in the province of Asia, home to the famous temple of Artemis.
2. The Greek *oida* ('I know') is emphatic — Christ's knowledge is comprehensive and personal. The triad of 'works, labor, endurance' (*erga, kopon, hypomonēn*) suggests both active effort and patient suffering. The testing of false apostles indicates a community with strong doctrinal vigilance — a quality that will be contrasted with their deficiency in verse 4.
3. The Greek *ou kekopiakes* ('you have not grown weary') uses the perfect tense, indicating a sustained state — they have not flagged despite ongoing hardship. The phrase 'for the sake of my name' (*dia to onoma mou*) connects their suffering to their identification with Christ.
4. The Greek *aphēkes* ('you have abandoned, left behind') is a strong word — not 'diminished' or 'cooled' but actively forsaken. The 'first love' (*tēn agapēn sou tēn prōtēn*) likely refers to the initial fervent devotion to Christ and to one another that characterized the community's founding. The irony is sharp: a church excellent at doctrinal vigilance has lost the very thing that motivated its faith.
5. Three imperatives frame the call to restoration: 'remember' (*mnēmoneue*), 'repent' (*metanoēson*), and 'do' (*poiēson*). Repentance here is not merely feeling sorry but taking concrete action — returning to the 'first works.' The threat to remove the lampstand means the loss of the church's identity and witness — it would cease to exist as a church. This is not about individual salvation but about the community's corporate calling.
6. The identity of the Nicolaitans (*Nikolaitōn*) is uncertain. Early church tradition connected them to Nicolas of Antioch (Acts 6:5), but this is unverifiable. Their 'works' appear related to the teaching of Balaam in 2:14-15 — compromise with pagan religious practices. The name may be a Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Balaam (both possibly meaning 'conqueror of the people'), though this etymology is debated. Christ's statement 'which I also hate' validates the church's rejection of these practices.
7. The hearing formula ('let the one who has an ear hear') echoes Jesus's words in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 11:15; 13:9). The promise of the 'tree of life' (*xylou tēs zōēs*) reaches back to Genesis 2:9 and 3:22-24 — access to the tree that was lost at the fall is restored to those who conquer. The same tree reappears in Revelation 22:2. The word *paradeisos* ('paradise') is a Persian loanword originally meaning 'an enclosed garden,' used in the Septuagint for the Garden of Eden.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Genesis 2:9. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. Christ's self-identification draws from 1:17-18. For a church facing death, Christ identifies himself as one who has already passed through death and conquered it. Smyrna (modern Izmir) was a prosperous port city; its name is related to the word for myrrh, an aromatic resin associated with burial — an ironic connection given the letter's theme of suffering and death.
9. The paradox 'poverty but rich' (*ptōcheian, alla plousios*) inverts worldly categories — material deprivation coexists with spiritual wealth, a reversal that contrasts sharply with Laodicea (3:17). The phrase 'synagogue of Satan' (*synagōgē tou satana*) reflects a specific local conflict where certain members of the Jewish community were opposing or denouncing Christians to Roman authorities. This is not a blanket condemnation of Judaism but a charge against specific accusers. The Greek *blasphēmian* here means 'slander' or 'defamation' rather than blasphemy in the theological sense.
10. The 'ten days' (*hēmerōn deka*) may echo Daniel 1:12-14 (Daniel's ten-day test) or simply indicate a limited, defined period of suffering. The promise 'be faithful unto death' (*gīnou pistos achrī thanatou*) does not mean 'until you die of old age' but 'even if faithfulness costs your life.' The 'crown of life' (*ton stephanon tēs zōēs*) uses *stephanos*, the victor's wreath given to athletic champions, not *diadēma* (a royal crown) — the imagery is of winning a contest through endurance. Smyrna was famous for its athletic games, making this metaphor locally resonant.

- 10.** [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Daniel 1:12-14 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
- 11.** The double negative *ou mē* ('absolutely not') is the strongest form of negation in Greek — there is no possibility of harm from the second death for the one who conquers. The 'second death' (*tou thanatou tou deuterou*) is defined in 20:14 as 'the lake of fire.' Physical death may come to the faithful in Smyrna, but the second death — final, permanent separation from God — holds no power over them.
- 12.** Christ's self-identification draws from 1:16. For a church in a city dominated by Roman imperial authority, the reference to a sword is significant — Rome claimed the 'right of the sword' (*ius gladii*), the authority to execute. Christ holds a greater sword, one that proceeds from his mouth (the word of truth that judges all human authority). Pergamum was the administrative capital of the province of Asia and a major center of emperor worship.
- 13.** The 'throne of Satan' (*ho thronos tou satana*) may refer to the great altar of Zeus on the Pergamum acropolis, the temple of Augustus and Roma (the first provincial temple of the imperial cult in Asia), or the city's role as the judicial seat where death sentences were pronounced. The exact referent is uncertain; the point is that Pergamum was a stronghold of forces opposed to Christ. Antipas is called 'my faithful witness' (*ho martyrs mou ho pistos mou*) — the same title given to Christ himself in 1:5. The word *martyrs* here carries both its original meaning ('witness') and its developing sense of 'one who dies for testimony' — the English word 'martyr' derives from this Greek word.
- 14.** The reference to Balaam draws on Numbers 22-25 and 31:16. According to the tradition, Balaam could not curse Israel directly, so he advised Balak to seduce Israel into idolatry and sexual sin through Moabite women — an indirect strategy of corruption from within. The parallel is clear: some in Pergamum are teaching that participation in pagan religious feasts (which involved eating idol-sacrificed food and often ritual sexual activity) is acceptable. The Greek *eidōlothyta* ('food sacrificed to idols') and *porneusai* ('to practice sexual immorality') are the same issues addressed at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:20, 29).
- 14.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Numbers 22-25. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
- 15.** The word *homoiōs* ('in the same way, likewise') links the Nicolaitans directly to the teaching of Balaam — the two groups may be identical or share the same essential error of accommodating pagan practice. The SBLGNT does not include 'which thing I hate' (found in some manuscripts and reflected in the KJV); we follow the critical text.
- 16.** The command to repent is directed to the whole church ('you,' singular, addressing the congregation), but the war is directed against 'them' (the Nicolaitans/Balaamites). The church as a whole is responsible for tolerating false teaching within its community. The 'sword of my mouth' (*tē rhomphaia tou stomatos mou*) is the word of Christ that exposes and judges — the same sword described in 1:16 and drawn from Isaiah 49:2.
- 16.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 49:2. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
- 17.** Three gifts are promised: hidden manna, a white stone, and a new name. The 'hidden manna' (*tou manna tou kekrymmenou*) alludes to the jar of manna preserved in the ark of the covenant (Exodus 16:33-34; Hebrews 9:4) and to Jewish tradition that Jeremiah hid the ark before the Babylonian destruction. Against the temptation to eat idol-food, Christ offers heavenly food. The 'white stone' (*psēphon leukēn*) has been variously interpreted: a voting pebble signifying acquittal, an admission token to a feast, or a victor's token. The 'new name' may echo Isaiah 62:2 ('you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will bestow'). Its secrecy — known only to the recipient — suggests an intimate, personal relationship between Christ and the individual believer.
- 17.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Exodus 16:33-34. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
- 17.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 62:2. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
- 18.** This is the only place in Revelation where the title 'Son of God' (*ho huios tou theou*) is used explicitly. The description draws from 1:14-15. Thyatira was the smallest of the seven cities but receives the longest letter. The city was known for its trade guilds (including dyeing — Lydia, the seller of purple cloth in Acts 16:14, was from Thyatira). Guild membership typically required participation in guild feasts held in pagan temples, creating the central tension of this letter.
- 19.** Four qualities are listed: love (*agapēn*), faith (*pistin*), service (*diakonian*), and endurance (*hypomonēn*). Notably, Thyatira possesses the very quality Ephesus has lost — love. The statement that their 'last works are greater than the first' (*ta erga sou ta eschata pleiona tōn prōtōn*) indicates a growing, maturing community — the opposite trajectory from Ephesus, which declined from its first love.
- 20.** The name 'Jezebel' (*Iezabel*) almost certainly alludes to Ahab's wife in 1 Kings 16:31 and 21:25, who promoted Baal worship in Israel and persecuted the prophets of the LORD. Whether this is the woman's actual name or a prophetic label is debated; the Old Testament association — a woman who leads God's people into idolatry — is clearly intended. The charges are identical to the Balaam/Nicolaitan teaching in the Pergamum letter: idol-food and sexual immorality, the twin temptations of assimilation into Greco-Roman culture.
- 20.** [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes 1 Kings 16:31 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
- 21.** The verb *edōka* ('I gave') is aorist — time for repentance was given at a specific past point. The present tense *ou thelei* ('she does not wish, refuses') indicates an ongoing, deliberate choice. The opportunity for repentance was real but has been rejected. God's patience has a boundary.

- 22.** The 'bed' (*klinēn*) is an ironic reversal — the bed of illicit pleasure becomes a bed of illness and judgment. The Greek *moicheuontas* ('committing adultery') may be literal or metaphorical (spiritual unfaithfulness, following the Old Testament prophetic tradition where idolatry is depicted as adultery — cf. Hosea, Ezekiel 16, 23). The condition 'unless they repent' (*ean mē metanoēsōsin*) keeps the door open — even followers of Jezebel can still turn back.
- 22.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Ezekiel 16. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
- 23.** The phrase 'her children' (*ta tekna autēs*) likely refers to her committed followers, not biological offspring. The expression 'searches minds and hearts' (*eraunōn nephrou kai kardias*) echoes Jeremiah 17:10 ('I the LORD search the heart and test the mind'), directly applying a divine prerogative of YHWH to Christ. The Greek *nephrou* literally means 'kidneys,' which in ancient thought were the seat of deep emotion and will — we render it as 'minds' for clarity. The principle of judgment 'according to your works' (*kata ta erga hymōn*) echoes Psalm 62:12 and Proverbs 24:12.
- 23.** [TCR Cross-Reference] References Jeremiah 17:10 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
- 23.** [TCR Cross-Reference] References Psalm 62:12 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
- 23.** [TCR Cross-Reference] References Proverbs 24:12 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
- 24.** The phrase *ta bathēa tou satana* ('the deep things of Satan') is ambiguous: it may be what Jezebel's followers claimed as their own teaching (claiming to know 'deep things,' possibly gnostic-style secret knowledge, which Christ relabels as satanic), or it may be Christ's own label for their teaching. The phrase *hōs legousin* ('as they say') suggests the former — they advertised their knowledge of 'deep things,' and Christ reframes it. The phrase 'no other burden' (*ou...allo baros*) echoes the language of the Jerusalem Council's decision (Acts 15:28).
- 25.** The imperative *kratēsate* ('hold fast, grip firmly') implies active resistance, not passive waiting. The phrase *achri hou an hēxō* ('until I come') points to the return of Christ — the eschatological horizon that frames all seven letters.
- 26.** The promise shifts from individual rewards (tree of life, hidden manna) to cosmic authority. The phrase *exousian epi tōn ethnōn* ('authority over the nations') draws from Psalm 2, which is quoted directly in the next verse. This is a royal promise: those who share in Christ's faithful endurance will share in his reign.
- 26.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Psalm 2. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
- 27.** This is a direct quotation from Psalm 2:9 (LXX), a royal enthronement psalm. The verb *poimanei* can mean 'to rule' or 'to shepherd' — the dual meaning is deliberate, as ancient kings were conceived as shepherds of their people. The iron rod and shattered pottery express the irresistible authority of the messianic king. In Psalm 2, this authority belongs to God's anointed; here Christ shares it with those who conquer.
- 27.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Psalms 2:9. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
- 28.** Christ's authority is derived from the Father and then shared with the faithful — a chain of delegated sovereignty. The 'morning star' (*ton astera ton prōinon*) is identified in 22:16 as Christ himself ('I am the bright morning star'). The gift of the morning star is therefore the gift of Christ's own presence and glory. The morning star allusion may also draw on Numbers 24:17 ('A star will come out of Jacob'), one of the oldest messianic oracles.
- 28.** [TCR Cross-Reference] References Numbers 24:17 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
- 29.** In the first three letters, the hearing formula precedes the promise to the conqueror; in the last four (beginning with Thyatira), the promise precedes the hearing formula. This structural shift at the midpoint of the seven letters may be intentional, though its significance is debated.

### 3

**Summary:** *Revelation 3 contains the final three of seven letters to the churches of Asia: Sardis (vv. 1-6), Philadelphia (vv. 7-13), and Laodicea (vv. 14-22). Sardis has a reputation for being alive but is actually dead and is called to wake up. Philadelphia, despite little power, has kept Christ's word and is promised an open door that no one can shut and protection from the coming hour of trial. Laodicea is famously 'lukewarm' — neither hot nor cold — and is warned that Christ is about to spit them out of his mouth. Yet even to Laodicea the invitation remains: Christ stands at the door and knocks.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The Sardis and Laodicea letters contain no commendation, while the Philadelphia and Smyrna letters (ch. 2) contain no criticism — only two churches on each extreme. The 'open door' promise to Philadelphia (3:8) may relate to missionary opportunity or eschatological access. The Laodicea letter's imagery is drawn from local conditions: Laodicea's water supply came via aqueduct from hot springs near Hierapolis and arrived lukewarm; the city was a wealthy banking center (hence 'you say I am rich'); and it was famous for black wool and eye salve (hence the counsel to buy white garments and eye ointment). The image of Christ knocking at the door (3:20) has become one of the most recognized images in Christian art and devotion.*

**Translation Friction:** *The 'synagogue of Satan' reference recurs in the Philadelphia letter (3:9), reflecting the same first-century Jewish-Christian conflict noted in the Smyrna letter. The 'hour of trial coming on the whole world' (3:10) has been variously interpreted as a local persecution, a future tribulation, or both; we render the text as written. The phrase 'I will spit you out of my mouth' (3:16) uses the Greek *emesai*, which literally means 'to vomit.'*

**Connections:** *Sardis: Isaiah 29:13 (outward appearance vs. reality), Daniel 5:27 (weighed and found wanting). Philadelphia: Isaiah 22:22 (key of David), Isaiah 60:14 (enemies bowing before God's people), Isaiah 62:2 (new name). Laodicea: Hosea 12:8 (Israel's false self-assessment of wealth), Proverbs 3:12 (whom the Lord loves he disciplines), Song of Solomon 5:2 (knocking at the door).*

<sup>1</sup>To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of the one who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works. You have a reputation for being alive, but you are dead. <sup>2</sup>Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete before my God. <sup>3</sup>Remember then what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. <sup>4</sup>Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. <sup>5</sup>The one who conquers will be clothed in white garments in this way, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. <sup>6</sup>Let the one who has an ear hear what the Spirit says to the churches." <sup>7</sup>To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens: <sup>8</sup>"I know your works. Look, I have placed before you an open door that no one is able to shut. I know that you have little power, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. <sup>9</sup>Look, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say they are Jews and are not, but lie — look, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will know that I have loved you. <sup>10</sup>Because you have kept my word of endurance, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. <sup>11</sup>I am coming soon. Hold fast to what you have, so that no one takes your crown. <sup>12</sup>The one who conquers — I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he will never go out of it again. I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God — the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God — and my own new name. <sup>13</sup>Let the one who has an ear hear what the Spirit says to the churches." <sup>14</sup>To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of God's creation: <sup>15</sup>"I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. <sup>16</sup>So, because you are lukewarm — neither hot nor cold — I am about to vomit you out of my mouth. <sup>17</sup>For you say, 'I am rich; I have prospered and need nothing,' not realizing that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. <sup>18</sup>I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may be clothed and the shame of your nakedness not be exposed, and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. <sup>19</sup>Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline. Therefore be zealous and repent. <sup>20</sup>Look, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. <sup>21</sup>The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, just as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. <sup>22</sup>Let the one who has an ear hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

#### TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. Christ identifies himself by holding both the seven spirits (fullness of the Spirit) and the seven stars (the churches' angels) — complete authority over spiritual life and over the churches. The indictment is devastating: *onoma echeis hoti zēs* ('you have a name that you are alive') — reputation without

reality. Sardis was historically captured twice by enemies who exploited its defenders' complacency (by Cyrus in 547 BC and by Antiochus III in 214 BC), giving the command to 'wake up' in verse 2 a pointed local resonance.

2. The imperative *ginou grēgorōn* ('become watchful/wake up') uses the present imperative, indicating a state that must begin and continue. The verb *stērison* ('strengthen') is aorist — an urgent, decisive action. What remains is 'about to die' (*emellon apothanein*) — the situation is critical but not yet beyond rescue. The works are not called sinful but 'incomplete' (*peplērōmena* in the negative) — Sardis has started well but not followed through.
3. The four imperatives — 'remember' (*mnēmoneue*), 'keep' (*tērei*), 'repent' (*metanoēson*) — escalate in urgency. The thief metaphor (*hōs kleptēs*) echoes Jesus's teaching in Matthew 24:43-44 and Paul's use in 1 Thessalonians 5:2. Given Sardis's history of being captured because its watchmen fell asleep, the image of a thief in the night would have been particularly stinging. The phrase 'come against you' (*hēxō epi se*) is threatening rather than comforting — this is a coming in judgment.
4. The word *onomata* ('names') is used metonymically for people — a few individuals amid the spiritually dead church have remained faithful. 'Soiled their garments' (*emolunan ta himatia*) is a metaphor for moral or spiritual contamination. Walking 'in white' (*en leukois*) symbolizes purity, victory, and festal celebration — white garments were worn at Roman triumphs and at festivals. The declaration 'they are worthy' (*axioi eisin*) stands in implicit contrast to the unworthiness of the majority.
5. Three promises: white garments (purity/victory), retention in the book of life, and personal acknowledgment by Christ before God. The 'book of life' (*tēs biblou tēs zōēs*) appears in Exodus 32:32-33, Psalm 69:28, and Daniel 12:1 — a register of those who belong to God. The double negative *ou mē* ('never, absolutely not') provides emphatic assurance. Christ's promise to 'confess' (*homologēsō*) their name echoes his teaching in Matthew 10:32 ('whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven').
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Exodus 32:32-33 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Psalm 69:28 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Daniel 12:1 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
6. The hearing formula closes the Sardis letter. As in the final four letters, it follows rather than precedes the promise to the conqueror.
7. Unlike the other letters, Christ does not identify himself by features from the chapter 1 vision but by titles — 'the holy one' (*ho hagios*) and 'the true one' (*ho alēthinos*) — that are divine attributes in the Old Testament. The 'key of David' (*tēn klein Daud*) draws directly from Isaiah 22:22, where Eliakim is given the key to the house of David, granting unrestricted authority to grant or deny access. Applied to Christ, this means he alone controls access to God's kingdom. Philadelphia ('brotherly love') was a frontier city founded to spread Greek culture eastward — a detail that adds resonance to the 'open door' promise.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 22:22. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. The 'open door' (*thyran ēneōgmenēn*) has been interpreted as missionary opportunity (cf. Paul's use in 1 Corinthians 16:9, 2 Corinthians 2:12, Colossians 4:3) or as assured access to God's kingdom. Given the key-of-David context, the latter is primary — Christ has opened a door for Philadelphia that no earthly power can close. The phrase 'little power' (*mikran echeis dynamin*) is not a rebuke but an acknowledgment of the church's small size and limited social influence. Despite their weakness, they have been faithful — the opposite of Sardis, which had reputation but no reality.
9. The 'synagogue of Satan' reappears from the Smyrna letter (2:9), indicating a similar conflict in Philadelphia. The promise that opponents will 'bow before your feet' (*proskynēsousin enōpion tōn podōn sou*) echoes Isaiah 60:14 ('the children of your oppressors will come bowing before you') and Isaiah 49:23. The ironic reversal is striking: those who denied the Philadelphian Christians' status before God will be brought to acknowledge that God's love rests on this small, weak community. The verb *proskynēsousin* here means 'bow down' or 'do obeisance,' not necessarily 'worship' in the fullest sense.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 60:14. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 49:23. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
10. The phrase *ton logon tēs hypomonēs mou* ('my word of endurance') means either 'the word about my endurance' or 'the word that calls for endurance' — the genitive is ambiguous and may be intentionally so. The promise *tērēsō ek* ('I will keep from') is debated: *ek* can mean 'out of' (removal from) or 'through' (protection within). The text does not resolve whether Christians will be absent from the trial or preserved through it. The 'hour of trial' (*tēs hōras tou peirasmou*) coming on the 'whole world' (*tēs oikoumenēs holēs*) indicates a universal scope — not merely local persecution but a worldwide crisis.
11. The present tense *erchomai* ('I am coming') conveys imminence and certainty. The 'crown' (*ton stephanon*) is the victor's wreath, as in 2:10 — not a possession to be casually held but a prize that can be forfeited through unfaithfulness. The warning 'so that no one takes' (*hina mēdeis labē*) implies that the crown is not irrevocably secured but depends on continued faithfulness.
12. Three names are inscribed on the conqueror: God's name, the city's name, and Christ's new name — expressing total belonging. The 'pillar' (*stulon*) metaphor promises permanence in God's presence. Philadelphia experienced frequent earthquakes, and after the devastating earthquake of 17 AD, residents often fled the city to the surrounding countryside; the promise 'he will never go out again' (*exō ou mē exelthē eti*) would resonate

powerfully with people who knew the terror of collapsing buildings. The 'new Jerusalem' (kainēs Ierousalēm) anticipates the climactic vision of chapters 21-22. Christ says 'my God' (tou theou mou) four times in this verse, emphasizing his mediatorial role.

13. The hearing formula closes the Philadelphia letter, the sixth of seven. Philadelphia and Smyrna are the only two churches that receive no rebuke — both are small, suffering communities that have remained faithful.
14. Christ identifies himself with three titles: 'the Amen' (ho amēn) — the one in whom all God's promises find their 'yes' (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:20; Isaiah 65:16, where God is called 'the God of Amen/truth'); 'the faithful and true witness' (ho martys ho pistos kai alēthinos); and 'the origin of God's creation' (hē archē tēs ktiseōs tou theou). The Greek archē can mean 'beginning,' 'origin,' 'ruler,' or 'first cause.' We render it as 'origin' to avoid the misreading that Christ was the first created being — the term indicates source and sovereignty, not temporal sequence, consistent with its use in Colossians 1:15-18.
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 65:16. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
15. The hot/cold metaphor has often been misread as 'fervent vs. opposed.' In context, both hot water (from the nearby hot springs of Hierapolis, used for healing) and cold water (from the mountain springs of Colossae, refreshing and pure) were useful. Lukewarm water — what Laodicea actually received through its aqueduct — was nauseating and useless. The point is not that opposition is preferable to indifference, but that the Laodicean church provides neither healing nor refreshment. The Greek ophelon ('I wish, would that') expresses strong desire.
16. The Greek emesai literally means 'to vomit' — a visceral, revolting image. The KJV's 'spue' (spew) softens this slightly. We render the physical force of the verb directly. The verb mellō ('I am about to') indicates imminence but not yet completion — there is still time for Laodicea to change. Anyone who drank the tepid, mineral-laden water arriving through Laodicea's aqueduct would understand this metaphor immediately.
17. The contrast is total: Laodicea's self-assessment ('rich, prospered, needing nothing') is the exact opposite of Christ's diagnosis ('wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, naked'). The fivefold indictment dismantles every claim. Laodicea was genuinely wealthy — after an earthquake in 60 AD, the city famously refused imperial aid and rebuilt with its own resources (Tacitus, Annals 14.27). The church has absorbed the city's self-sufficient attitude. The echo of Hosea 12:8 ('I have become wealthy; I have found riches for myself') is unmistakable — Israel made the same boast.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Hosea 12:8. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
18. Each remedy precisely addresses a local industry and a spiritual deficiency. Laodicea was a banking center (gold), known for its glossy black wool textiles (garments), and home to a famous medical school that produced a Phrygian eye powder (eye salve). Christ ironically tells this commercially successful city to 'buy' from him — the only merchant whose goods can address their actual poverty. The gold 'refined by fire' (pepyrōmenon ek pyros) suggests faith tested through suffering (cf. 1 Peter 1:7). The white garments contrast with the city's signature black wool.
19. This verse reveals that the severe language of the Laodicean letter is motivated by love (philō), not rejection. The principle echoes Proverbs 3:12 ('the LORD disciplines those he loves') and Hebrews 12:6. The Greek verb philō indicates personal, affectionate love — even lukewarm Laodicea is loved. The two imperatives 'be zealous' (zēleue) and 'repent' (metanoēson) call for passionate commitment and a decisive turn — the opposite of lukewarm indifference.
19. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Proverbs 3:12. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
20. This verse is often read as an evangelistic appeal to non-believers, but in context Christ is addressing a church — he stands outside the door of a community that bears his name. The image may draw on Song of Solomon 5:2 ('I slept but my heart was awake. A sound! My beloved is knocking'). The meal (deipnēsō, 'I will dine/eat the evening meal') suggests intimate fellowship — table fellowship in the ancient world signified deep personal relationship. The reciprocity is striking: 'I with him and he with me' (met' autou kai autos met' emou) — a shared meal where both host and guest give and receive.
20. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Song of Solomon 5:2 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
21. This is the climactic promise of the seven letters — the greatest of all the rewards. The conqueror is offered a share in Christ's own throne, which is itself a share in the Father's throne. The chain is explicit: the Father shares his throne with Christ, Christ shares his throne with the faithful. The verb enikēsa ('I conquered') uses the same root as nikōn ('the one who conquers') — Christ's conquest (through faithful suffering and death) is the pattern for the believer's conquest.
22. The hearing formula closes the seventh and final letter, completing the cycle that began in 2:1. The seven letters collectively address every possible condition a church can face: persecution, false teaching, compromise, complacency, decline, faithfulness in weakness, and self-satisfied indifference. Together they form a comprehensive pastoral address to the church in every age.

## 4

**Summary:** *Revelation 4 shifts from the seven churches on earth to the throne room of heaven. John sees an open door in heaven and hears the trumpet-like voice from chapter 1 calling him to come up. He is immediately 'in the Spirit' and sees a throne with one seated on it, described in terms of precious stones and surrounded by a rainbow. Twenty-four elders on twenty-four thrones encircle the central throne, dressed in white with golden crowns. From the throne come lightning, thunder, and voices. Seven blazing torches burn before the throne. A crystal sea stretches before it. Four living creatures — one like a lion, one like an ox, one with a human face, and one like a flying eagle — each covered with eyes and having six wings, never cease to cry: 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come.' When they give glory, the twenty-four elders fall down in worship, casting their crowns before the throne.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The throne-room vision draws heavily from three Old Testament sources: Isaiah 6 (seraphim with six wings crying 'Holy, holy, holy'), Ezekiel 1 and 10 (four living creatures with multiple faces and eyes), and Daniel 7 (the Ancient of Days on his throne). John synthesizes these traditions into a single, cohesive vision. The one on the throne is never directly named or described in anthropomorphic terms — only through the imagery of light refracted through gemstones. The 'trisasgion' (threefold 'holy') is one of the oldest continuous liturgical elements in Christian worship. The twenty-four elders may represent the twelve tribes and twelve apostles — the full people of God from both covenants.*

**Translation Friction:** *We render the vision as presented without attempting to identify the symbolic referents definitively. The rainbow (iris) is described as 'like an emerald' (homoios horasei smaragdinō), which is unusual since rainbows are multicolored; this may refer to a dominant green hue or to a circular halo of light. The precise identification of the gemstones (iaspidi, sardiō) is uncertain; ancient gem names do not always correspond to modern ones.*

**Connections:** *Isaiah 6:1-4 (seraphim, trisasgion), Ezekiel 1:4-28 (four living creatures, throne, rainbow, crystal), Ezekiel 10 (cherubim), Daniel 7:9-10 (Ancient of Days, throne, fire), 1 Kings 22:19 (heavenly court), Exodus 24:10 (sapphire pavement under God's feet). The 'sea of glass' may echo the bronze sea in Solomon's temple (1 Kings 7:23) or the cosmic waters above the firmament (Genesis 1:6-7).*

<sup>1</sup>After this I looked, and there before me was an open door in heaven. And the first voice that I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." <sup>2</sup>At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne set in heaven, with one seated on the throne. <sup>3</sup>And the one seated there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. <sup>4</sup>Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. <sup>5</sup>From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder. Before the throne burned seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God. <sup>6</sup>Before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the center, around the throne, were four living creatures covered with eyes in front and behind. <sup>7</sup>The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature was like an ox, the third living creature had a face like that of a human, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.

<sup>8</sup>Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around and within. Day and night they never cease to say:

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

<sup>9</sup>And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanksgiving to the one seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, <sup>10</sup>The four and twenty elders fall down prior to him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns prior to the throne and stated,

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

---

#### TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The phrase *meta tauta* ('after this') marks a major structural transition — from the earthly churches to the heavenly throne room. The 'first voice' (*hē phōnē hē prōtē*) refers back to 1:10, connecting this scene to the initial commission. The open door in heaven (*thyra ēneōgmenē en tō ouranō*) recalls Ezekiel 1:1 ('the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God'). The phrase *ha dei genesthai* ('what must take place') echoes Daniel 2:28-29 (LXX), where Daniel reveals to Nebuchadnezzar 'what must happen in the last days.'
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Ezekiel 1:1. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Daniel 2:28-29. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
2. This is the second of four 'in the Spirit' (*en pneumati*) experiences in Revelation (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10), each introducing a major new vision. The description of the one on the throne is strikingly restrained — no human features are described, only the appearance of gemstones and light (v. 3). This reticence about depicting God directly follows the tradition of Ezekiel 1:26-28, where the prophet describes only 'the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.'
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Ezekiel 1:26-28. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
3. God is described entirely through light and gemstones — jasper (*iaspidi*, likely a clear, brilliant stone, not the modern opaque jasper) and carnelian (*sardiō*, a red stone). The combination of clear brilliance and deep red may evoke glory and judgment. The rainbow (*iris*) echoes Genesis 9:13-16, where the rainbow is the sign of God's covenant with Noah — its presence around the throne is a covenant symbol. The emerald-like quality (*smaragdinō*) gives the rainbow a dominant green hue, suggesting life and renewal. Ezekiel 1:28 similarly describes 'the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds' surrounding the divine presence.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Genesis 9:13-16 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Ezekiel 1:28 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. The twenty-four elders (*eikosi tessaras presbyterous*) have been variously identified as angelic beings, heavenly representatives of Israel's tribes, the combined twelve patriarchs and twelve apostles, or the twenty-four priestly divisions of 1 Chronicles 24. Their white garments recall the promise to the faithful in 3:4-5, and their crowns (*stephanous, victor's wreaths*) will be cast before the throne in verse 10. They sit on thrones (*thronous*), indicating delegated authority within a heavenly court.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes 1 Chronicles 24. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
5. Lightning, voices/rumblings, and thunder (*astrapai kai phōnai kai brontai*) echo the Sinai theophany (Exodus 19:16) and recur at key structural points in Revelation (8:5; 11:19; 16:18), each time with escalating intensity. The seven torches (*hepta lampades pyros*) are explicitly identified as the seven spirits of God, connecting to 1:4 and 3:1. The imagery merges Zechariah's seven-lamped menorah (Zechariah 4:2) with the fiery presence of God. The Greek *lampades* refers to torches or large lamps, not small candles.
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Exodus 19:16 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Zechariah 4:2 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
6. The 'sea of glass' (*thalassa hyalinē*) may recall the cosmic waters above the firmament (Genesis 1:6-7), the bronze sea in Solomon's temple (1 Kings 7:23-26), or the pavement of sapphire under God's feet at Sinai (Exodus 24:10). Its crystal-like stillness contrasts with the turbulent sea that symbolizes chaos elsewhere in Revelation. The four 'living creatures' (*zōa*, not 'beasts' as in the KJV — *zōa* means 'living beings,' while the hostile creatures of later chapters are *thēria*, 'beasts/wild animals'). Their eyes covering front and back suggest omniscient awareness. The description draws on Ezekiel 1:5-21 and 10:12.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Genesis 1:6-7. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes 1 Kings 7:23-26. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.

6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Exodus 24:10. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Ezekiel 1:5-21. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. The four faces correspond to Ezekiel 1:10, where each cherub has all four faces simultaneously; here each creature bears one face. The lion, ox, human, and eagle have been traditionally interpreted as representing the noblest, strongest, wisest, and swiftest of all creatures — the entirety of animate creation in worship before the Creator. Early Christian tradition also associated them with the four Gospels (lion = Mark, ox = Luke, human = Matthew, eagle = John), though this association is not in the text. The Greek *moschos* ('calf, young bull') is rendered 'ox' to capture the full-grown stature implied by the parallel with lion and eagle.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Ezekiel 1:10. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. The six wings come from Isaiah 6:2 (the seraphim), while the eyes come from Ezekiel 1 and 10 (the cherubim). John's living creatures merge features of Isaiah's seraphim and Ezekiel's cherubim into a single heavenly order. The trisagion ('Holy, holy, holy') is a direct echo of Isaiah 6:3. In Hebrew, repetition for emphasis is common (doubling = superlative), but the threefold repetition is unique in the Old Testament and expresses the absolute holiness of God. The threefold temporal designation (*ho ēn kai ho ōn kai ho erchomenos*) repeats from 1:4 and 1:8, but here the order shifts — 'who was' comes first, perhaps emphasizing God's eternal past as foundation for present and future sovereignty.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 6:3 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Ezekiel 1 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
9. The temporal clause *hotan dōsousin* ('whenever they give') uses the indefinite construction, indicating a repeated, ongoing action — each time the living creatures offer their praise, the elders respond. The three offerings — glory (*doxan*), honor (*timēn*), and thanksgiving (*eucharistian*) — will be expanded to seven in 7:12. The phrase *tō zōnti eis tous aiōnas tōn aiōnōn* ('the one living into the ages of the ages') affirms God's eternal, inexhaustible life.
10. The casting of crowns (*balousin tous stephanous*) is an act of subordination — whatever authority or honor the elders possess is derived from and returned to the one on the throne. In Greco-Roman culture, subject kings would lay their crowns before the emperor as a sign of submission; here the gesture acknowledges that all created authority is delegated from and belongs to God. The repetition of 'forever and ever' reinforces the endless nature of this worship.
11. The acclamation 'worthy are you' (*axios ei*) deliberately echoes the Roman acclamation 'axios' ('worthy!') used to acclaim emperors. The heavenly court declares God — not Caesar — as the one truly worthy of universal praise. The title 'our Lord and God' (*ho kyrios kai ho theos hēmōn*) is notably the same title the emperor Domitian reportedly demanded: *dominus et deus noster* ('our lord and god'). The ground for worship is creation — God made all things, and all things exist because of his will (*dia thelēma sou*). The verb *ēsan* ('they existed') preceding *ektisthēsan* ('they were created') is puzzling; it may mean 'they came into being and were created' or 'they existed [in God's purpose] and [then] were created.'

## 5

**Summary:** *Revelation 5 continues the throne-room vision as John sees a scroll sealed with seven seals in the right hand of the one on the throne. A mighty angel asks who is worthy to open the scroll, and no one in heaven, on earth, or under the earth is found worthy. John weeps bitterly. Then one of the elders tells him to stop weeping: 'The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered.' But when John looks, he sees not a lion but a Lamb standing as though slaughtered, with seven horns and seven eyes. The Lamb takes the scroll, and the four living creatures and twenty-four elders fall before him, each holding harps and golden bowls of incense (the prayers of the saints). They sing a new song declaring the Lamb worthy because he was slaughtered and purchased people for God from every tribe and language. Myriads of angels join the worship, and finally every creature in all creation praises the one on the throne and the Lamb together.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The central literary and theological moment of the chapter — arguably of the entire book — is the contrast between what John hears and what he sees. He hears 'the Lion of Judah' but sees a slaughtered Lamb. This hear/see pattern is a key interpretive device in Revelation: the Lamb redefines what it means to be the Lion. Power operates through sacrifice. The Lamb (to *arnion*, a diminutive form) appears 28 times in Revelation, becoming the dominant christological image. The seven horns represent complete power, seven eyes complete knowledge (identified as the seven spirits of God sent into all the earth). The 'new song' combines themes from Isaiah 42:10*

*(new song of salvation), Psalm 33:3, and Psalm 96:1.*

**Translation Friction:** *The scroll (biblion) sealed with seven seals has been identified with various Old Testament backgrounds: Ezekiel's scroll of woes (Ezekiel 2:9-10), a Roman testament or will, a contract deed, or God's plan for history. We render it as written without resolving the identification. The phrase 'standing as though slaughtered' (hestēkos hōs esphagmenon) presents a paradox: the Lamb bears the marks of slaughter yet stands alive. We preserve this tension.*

**Connections:** *Genesis 49:9-10 (Lion of Judah), Isaiah 11:1, 10 (Root of David/Jesse), Isaiah 53:7 (lamb led to slaughter), Ezekiel 2:9-10 (scroll written on both sides), Daniel 7:10 (myriads of angels), Zechariah 4:10 (seven eyes of the LORD), Psalm 33:3, 96:1, 149:1 (new song), Exodus 19:6 (kingdom of priests), Isaiah 42:10 (new song of redemption).*

<sup>1</sup>Then I saw in the right hand of the one seated on the throne a scroll written on the inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. <sup>2</sup>And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" <sup>3</sup>And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it. <sup>4</sup>And I wept and wept because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. <sup>5</sup>Then one of the elders said to me, "Stop weeping. Look, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." <sup>6</sup>Then I saw, in the center of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the center of the elders, a Lamb standing as though slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. <sup>7</sup>He came and took the scroll from the right hand of the one seated on the throne. <sup>8</sup>When he took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

<sup>9</sup>And they sang a new song, saying:

"Worthy are you to take the scroll  
and to open its seals,  
for you were slaughtered  
and by your blood you purchased people for God  
from every tribe and language and people and nation,

<sup>10</sup>Hast made us to our God kings and priests — and we will reign on the earth. <sup>11</sup>Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders, and their number was myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, <sup>12</sup>Declaring with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to accept authority, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

<sup>13</sup>And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea — everything in them — saying:

"To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb  
be blessing and honor and glory and dominion  
forever and ever!"

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

#### TRANSLATOR NOTES

- The scroll (biblion) written on both sides echoes Ezekiel 2:9-10, where God's scroll was 'written on both sides with words of lamentation, mourning, and woe.' Writing on both sides indicates completeness — there is no room for additions. The seven seals (sphragisin hepta) indicate maximum security; each must be broken in sequence. In Roman legal practice, a testament required seven witnesses and seven seals. The scroll may represent God's redemptive plan, a decree of judgment, or the inheritance deed of creation.
- [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Ezekiel 2:9-10. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.

2. The 'mighty angel' (angelon ischyron) reappears in 10:1 and 18:21. The question 'who is worthy?' (tis axios) uses the same word (axios) as the acclamation in 4:11, where God is declared 'worthy.' The question is not merely 'who is able?' but 'who has the moral standing and authority?' The proclamation goes out to all of creation — the universal scope of the search emphasizes the uniqueness of the one who is eventually found worthy.
3. The threefold cosmic division — heaven, earth, under the earth — encompasses the totality of created existence (cf. Philippians 2:10). The Greek oudeis ('no one') is absolute. Not even looking at the scroll (blepein auto) is possible — the scroll's contents are completely inaccessible without a worthy mediator. The impossibility is total: no angel, no human, no being of any kind can approach God's sealed purpose.
4. The Greek ekleiaion poly ('I was weeping much') uses the imperfect tense, indicating continued, uncontrollable weeping — not a single tear but sustained grief. John's weeping reflects the devastating implication: if no one can open the scroll, God's purposes remain sealed and unrealized. Creation's story has no resolution, no redemption, no ending. The emotional intensity makes the resolution in verse 5 all the more dramatic.
5. Two messianic titles converge: 'the Lion of the tribe of Judah' from Genesis 49:9-10 (Jacob's blessing on Judah: 'Judah is a lion's cub') and 'the Root of David' from Isaiah 11:1, 10 (the shoot from Jesse's stump). Both are titles of royal power and conquest. The verb enikēsen ('has conquered') is the same root as nikōn ('the one who conquers') used in the promises to the seven churches — Christ is the archetypal conqueror. But the nature of his conquest will be radically redefined in the next verse.
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Genesis 49:9 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Isaiah 11:1 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
6. This is the pivotal moment of Revelation's theology. John hears 'Lion' but sees 'Lamb' — the hear/see contrast redefines conquest as sacrificial death. The Lamb (arnion, a diminutive of arēn) is small, vulnerable — yet it stands at the very center of heaven's power. 'Standing as though slaughtered' (hestēkos hōs esphagmenon) is a paradox: the marks of violent death are visible, yet the Lamb is alive and upright. The verb sphazō ('to slaughter') is the same used for ritual sacrifice. Seven horns represent complete power (horns = strength in biblical symbolism); seven eyes represent complete knowledge, identified with the seven spirits of God (cf. Zechariah 4:10, 'the eyes of the LORD that range through all the earth'). The slaughtered Lamb possesses omnipotence and omniscience.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Zechariah 4:10. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. The simplicity of this verse belies its enormity. The Lamb approaches the throne of God and takes the scroll — an act no one in all creation could perform. The perfect tense eilēphen ('has taken') in some manuscripts emphasizes the permanence of the act. The transfer of the scroll from the hand of God to the Lamb is the decisive moment of the entire heavenly scene — the one who was slaughtered now holds the destiny of creation.
8. The living creatures and elders offer the Lamb the same worship they gave to the one on the throne in 4:10 — a striking theological claim about the Lamb's divine status. The harps (kitharan) accompany the 'new song' of verse 9. The golden bowls of incense (phialas chrysas gemousas thymiamaton) directly identified as 'the prayers of the saints' (hai proseuchai tōn hagiōn) — the prayers of God's people on earth are present in heaven as fragrant offerings. This echoes Psalm 141:2 ('Let my prayer be set before you like incense'). The prayers of suffering believers are not lost but are held in golden vessels before the throne.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Psalm 141:2 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
9. The 'new song' (ōdēn kainēn) echoes Psalms 33:3, 96:1, and 149:1, as well as Isaiah 42:10 — always a song celebrating God's new act of salvation. The Lamb is 'worthy' (axios) — answering the question of verse 2. The ground of worthiness is sacrificial death: 'you were slaughtered' (esphagēs) and 'you purchased' (ēgorasas). The SBLGNT does not include 'us' (hēmas) after 'purchased,' reading instead 'you purchased for God' people from every group — the universal scope is the emphasis. The fourfold formula 'tribe, language, people, nation' (phylēs, glōssēs, laou, ethnous) appears seven times in Revelation with slight variations, expressing the complete diversity of humanity.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Psalms 33:3. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 42:10. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
10. The SBLGNT reads 'them' (autous) and 'they will reign' (basileusousin) rather than 'us' and 'we shall reign' — the elders and living creatures speak about the redeemed rather than identifying themselves as the redeemed. The echo of Exodus 19:6 ('a kingdom of priests') continues from 1:6. The future tense basileusousin ('they will reign') points to a still-future consummation of the saints' royal priesthood on earth — not in heaven as disembodied spirits but on the renewed earth.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Exodus 19:6 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
11. The worship expands concentrically: the four living creatures and twenty-four elders (v. 8), then countless angels (v. 11), then every creature in existence (v. 13). The numbers myriades myriadōn kai chiliades chiliadōn ('myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands') echo Daniel 7:10, where the heavenly court numbers 'a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.' These are not precise counts but expressions of innumerable multitude.
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Daniel 7:10. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.

12. Seven attributes are ascribed to the Lamb — power (dynamis), wealth (plouton), wisdom (sophian), might (ischyn), honor (timēn), glory (doxan), and blessing (eulogian). The sevenfold list represents completeness — the Lamb deserves all praise without remainder. The angels' acclamation parallels but expands the threefold praise of 4:11 (glory, honor, power), now directed not to the Creator alone but to the slaughtered Lamb. That a slain animal receives the same worship as the one on the throne is the theological climax of the chapter.
13. The worship reaches its widest circle — every creature (pan ktisma) in the fourfold cosmic division (heaven, earth, under earth, sea) joins the praise. The Lamb now receives praise alongside the one on the throne in a single doxology — 'to the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb' (tō kathēmēnō epi tō thronō kai tō arniō). This coordinated worship is one of Revelation's strongest statements of the Lamb's divine status. The four attributes (blessing, honor, glory, dominion) are directed jointly to God and the Lamb, with no distinction in the quality or degree of worship. The phrase eis tous aiōnas tōn aiōnōn ('forever and ever') ensures this is not temporary acclaim but eternal worship.
14. The chapter closes with the simplest possible response: 'Amen' from the living creatures and silent prostration from the elders. After the expanding circles of praise — four creatures, twenty-four elders, myriads of angels, every creature in existence — the scene resolves into stillness and wordless adoration. The SBLGNT does not include 'him who lives forever and ever' after 'worshiped' (found in some later manuscripts); the object of worship is implicit from the preceding context — both the one on the throne and the Lamb.

## 6

**Summary:** *Revelation 6 recounts the opening of the first six of the seven seals on the scroll. The first four seals release the four horsemen: a white horse (conquest), a red horse (war), a black horse (famine), and a pale horse (death), followed by Hades. The fifth seal reveals the souls of the martyrs under the altar, crying out for justice and told to wait until the full number of their fellow servants is completed. The sixth seal unleashes a cosmic catastrophe — a great earthquake, the sun turning black, the moon becoming like blood, stars falling, the sky rolling up, and every mountain and island displaced. The chapter ends with the terrified cry of kings, generals, and all people: 'Who is able to stand?'*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The four horsemen draw on Zechariah 1:8-11 and 6:1-8, where colored horses patrol the earth as agents of divine sovereignty. The imagery of cosmic collapse in the sixth seal comes from Isaiah 34:4 (the heavens rolled up like a scroll), Joel 2:31 (sun darkened, moon to blood), and Isaiah 2:19-21 (people hiding in rocks from God's terror). The cry of the martyrs under the altar (fifth seal) introduces a theology of divine justice delayed but not denied — God's people suffer and die, but their blood is remembered. The altar imagery suggests their deaths are sacrificial offerings. The chapter moves from human violence (horsemen) to divine response (cosmic signs), framing history as moving toward judgment.*

**Translation Friction:** *The identity of the rider on the white horse (first seal) is debated: some identify him as Christ (cf. 19:11), others as the Antichrist or a personification of conquest/imperialism. The text does not explicitly identify the rider, and we render the vision without resolving the ambiguity. The martyrs' cry 'How long?' (heos pote) echoes the psalms of lament, not vindictiveness. The cosmic language of the sixth seal may be literal, metaphorical, or both; we render it as written.*

**Connections:** *Zechariah 1:8-11, 6:1-8 (colored horses), Ezekiel 14:21 (four judgments: sword, famine, wild beasts, pestilence), Isaiah 34:4 (sky rolled up), Joel 2:31 (sun and moon), Isaiah 2:19-21 (hiding in rocks), Hosea 10:8 ('say to the mountains, cover us'), Psalm 79:5-10 (how long?), Nahum 1:6 (who can stand?), Malachi 3:2 (who can endure?).*

1Then I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, "Come!" 2I looked, and there was a white horse. Its rider held a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he rode out conquering and to conquer. 3When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" 4And out came another horse, fiery red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth so that people would slaughter one another, and he was given a great sword. 5When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there was a black horse, and its rider held a pair of scales in his hand. 6And I heard what sounded like a voice from among the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius — but do not damage the oil and the wine." 7When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" 8I looked, and there was a pale green horse. Its rider's name was Death, and Hades was

following close behind him. They were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild animals of the earth. <sup>9</sup>When the Lamb opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered because of the word of God and because of the testimony they had held. <sup>10</sup>They cried out with a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" <sup>11</sup>Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to rest a little longer, until the number would be completed of their fellow servants and their brothers and sisters who were about to be killed just as they had been. <sup>12</sup>I watched as the Lamb opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake, the sun turned black like sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood. <sup>13</sup>The stars of heaven fell to the present age, indeed as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. <sup>14</sup>The sky was split apart like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved from its place. <sup>15</sup>Then the kings of the earth, the nobles, the generals, the rich, the powerful, and every slave and free person hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. <sup>16</sup>They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! <sup>17</sup>For the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The SBLGNT reads simply *erchou* ('come'), without 'and see' (*kai ide/blepei*), which appears in some manuscripts and is reflected in the KJV. The command is directed to the horseman, summoning him forth, not to John. Each of the four living creatures in turn summons a horseman — they are agents of divine sovereignty, not passive observers. The voice 'like thunder' (*hōs phōnē brontēs*) conveys irresistible authority.
2. The white horse (*hippos leukos*) and its rider have been interpreted as Christ, the gospel's advance, military conquest, or the Antichrist. The passive *edothē* ('was given') — a 'divine passive' recurring throughout the seal judgments — indicates that the horseman's authority is granted from above. The bow (*toxon*) and crown (*stephanos*, victor's wreath) suggest military conquest. The phrase *nikōn kai hina nikēsē* ('conquering and in order to conquer') expresses unstoppable momentum. We render the vision as described without identifying the rider.
3. The pattern repeats: each seal opening is accompanied by a summons from one of the four living creatures. The second creature corresponds to the ox-like figure of 4:7.
4. The red horse (*hippos pyrrōs*, 'fire-red') represents bloodshed and war. The verb *sphaxousin* ('they will slaughter') is the same root (*sphazō*) used for the Lamb's sacrificial death in 5:6 — an ironic echo. Human beings slaughter one another while the slaughtered Lamb opens the seals. The 'great sword' (*machaira megalē*) is the short sword of close combat, not the long sword (*rhomphaia*) of Christ's mouth. The divine passive *edothē* ('was given/permitted') appears twice, emphasizing that even warfare operates under God's sovereign permission.
5. The black horse (*hippos melas*) represents famine and economic hardship. The scales (*zygon*, literally 'yoke' or 'balance') are instruments for measuring grain by weight — indicating scarcity so severe that food must be rationed. In prosperous times, grain was sold by volume; selling by weight indicates extreme shortage.
6. A *choenix* (approximately one quart or one liter) of wheat was a daily ration for one person. A *denarius* was a day's wage for a laborer (Matthew 20:2). Normally, a *denarius* could buy eight to twelve quarts of wheat. These prices represent inflation of roughly eight to twelve times normal — extreme but not total famine. Barley, the poor person's grain, is cheaper but still inflated. The command 'do not damage the oil and the wine' (*to elaion kai ton oinou mē adikēsēs*) has been interpreted as a limitation on the famine (luxury goods survive while necessities are scarce) or as divine protection of certain resources. Some see a reference to Domitian's edict regarding vineyard management in Asia Minor.
7. The fourth and final horseman is summoned by the eagle-like living creature (4:7). The four horsemen together correspond to the four judgments of Ezekiel 14:21 — sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts — which God sends as comprehensive judgment.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Ezekiel 14:21. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. The Greek *chlōros* means 'pale green, yellowish green' — the color of a corpse or of vegetation. It is the same word used for green grass in Mark 6:39. 'Pale green' captures the deathly pallor better than the KJV's generic 'pale.' This is the only horseman explicitly named: Death (*ho Thanatos*), with Hades (*ho Hadēs*) as his companion collecting the dead. The four means of killing — sword (*rhomphaia*), famine (*limos*), pestilence (*thanatos*, here meaning 'plague/deadly disease' rather than 'death'), and wild animals (*thēriōn*) — correspond to Ezekiel 14:21's four judgments. The scope is limited to 'a fourth of the earth' — devastating but not total, allowing room for repentance.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Ezekiel 14:21 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
9. The scene shifts from earth to heaven. The martyrs are 'under the altar' (*hypokatō tou thysiastēriou*), corresponding to the base of the sacrificial altar where the blood of offerings was poured (Leviticus 4:7). Their placement under the altar frames their deaths as sacrificial offerings — their blood, like animal blood, is at the altar's base. The verb *esphagmenōn* ('slaughtered') is the same word used for the Lamb in 5:6 — the martyrs' deaths mirror the

Lamb's death. They were killed *dia* ('because of') the word of God and their testimony — their faithfulness was the cause of their deaths.

9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Leviticus 4:7. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
10. The cry 'how long?' (*heōs pote*) echoes the psalms of lament (Psalm 6:3; 13:1-2; 79:5; 94:3) — the ancient cry of God's suffering people. The address *ho despotēs* ('Sovereign Lord, Master') is stronger than *kyrios* and emphasizes God's absolute authority — the martyrs appeal not to a peer but to the supreme ruler who has the power and right to act. The request for vengeance (*ekdikēis*, 'vindicate, avenge') is not personal revenge but a plea for divine justice — the restoration of moral order. 'Those who dwell on the earth' (*tōn katoikountōn epi tēs gēs*) becomes a fixed phrase in Revelation for humanity in opposition to God.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Psalm 6:3 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
11. The white robe (*stolē leukē*) is an interim reward — vindication and honor even before the final judgment. The instruction to 'rest a little longer' (*anapausontai eti chronon mikron*) implies that divine justice operates on a timeline that encompasses more martyrdoms yet to come. The disturbing implication is that God's plan includes the deaths of more faithful witnesses before the end. The phrase 'until the number would be completed' (*heōs plērōthōsin*) suggests a divinely determined measure of suffering — not arbitrary prolongation but purposeful completion. We render *adelphoi* as 'brothers and sisters' since the Greek can be inclusive.
12. The cosmic disruptions draw on Joel 2:31 ('The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood') and Isaiah 13:10 ('The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light'). Sackcloth (*sakkos trichinos*, 'sackcloth of hair') was a coarse, dark fabric made of goat hair, worn in mourning. The sun in sackcloth suggests the cosmos itself mourning. The moon 'like blood' (*hōs haima*) — reddened, ominous. These images appear in multiple prophetic texts as signs of the Day of the LORD (Isaiah 13:10; Joel 2:31; Amos 8:9), signaling divine intervention in cosmic terms.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Joel 2:31. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 13:10. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Amos 8:9. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
13. The simile of the fig tree (*sykē*) dropping unripe figs (*olythous*, the late figs that cling to the branch through winter) in a violent wind is vivid and agricultural — even the stars are no more secure in the sky than winter figs on a branch in a storm. The image echoes Isaiah 34:4 ('All the stars of the heavens will dissolve and the sky will be rolled up like a scroll; all their host will wither like leaves withering on a vine, like a withered fig falling from a fig tree').
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 34:4 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
14. The sky splitting like a rolled scroll comes directly from Isaiah 34:4 (LXX). The image suggests the sky peeling back to reveal the reality behind it — the barrier between heaven and earth torn open. Mountains and islands displaced (*ekinēthēsan*, 'were moved, shaken') represents the destabilization of what seems most permanent and immovable. The vision depicts the total unmaking of the created order — not merely weather events but the dissolution of the cosmic framework.
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 34:4. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
15. The list includes seven categories of people — from kings to slaves — representing the totality of human society. No one is exempt from the terror of God's judgment, regardless of rank or status. The movement from the powerful (kings, nobles, generals, rich, powerful) to the common (slave, free) shows that social hierarchies dissolve before divine judgment. Hiding in caves and rocks echoes Isaiah 2:19-21 ('People will flee to caves in the rocks and to holes in the ground from the fearful presence of the LORD').
15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Isaiah 2:19-21 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
16. The cry to the mountains echoes Hosea 10:8 ('they will say to the mountains, "Cover us!" and to the hills, "Fall on us!"), which Jesus also cited in Luke 23:30. The phrase 'the wrath of the Lamb' (*tēs orgēs tou arniou*) is one of Revelation's most arresting paradoxes — a lamb is the least wrathful of creatures, yet this Lamb's anger terrifies kings. The juxtaposition of 'the one on the throne' and 'the Lamb' as joint sources of wrath parallels their joint reception of worship in 5:13.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Hosea 10:8. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
17. The SBLGNT reads *autōn* ('their,' referring to both the one on the throne and the Lamb) rather than *autou* ('his'). The 'great day' (*hē hēmera hē megalē*) echoes the prophetic 'Day of the LORD' (Joel 2:11, 31; Zephaniah 1:14-18; Malachi 3:2; 4:5). The question 'who is able to stand?' (*tis dynatai stathēnai*) echoes Nahum 1:6 ('Who can endure his fierce anger?') and Malachi 3:2 ('Who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears?'). The question is rhetorical but receives its answer in chapter 7 — those sealed by God are able to stand.

17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Joel 2:11. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Zephaniah 1:14-18. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Malachi 3:2. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Nahum 1:6. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.

# 7

**Summary:** *Revelation 7 provides an interlude between the sixth and seventh seals, answering the question of 6:17: 'Who is able to stand?' Two scenes are presented. First, four angels hold back the four winds of the earth while another angel ascends from the rising sun with the seal of the living God, commanding that 144,000 servants of God be sealed on their foreheads — 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel (vv. 1-8). Second, John sees an innumerable multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and the Lamb, clothed in white robes, holding palm branches, and crying out that salvation belongs to God and to the Lamb. Angels, elders, and living creatures worship. One of the elders identifies the multitude as those who have come out of the great tribulation, who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. The chapter concludes with a promise that God will shelter them, and the Lamb will shepherd them to springs of living water, and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The hear/see pattern from chapter 5 recurs: John hears a number (144,000 from Israel's tribes) but sees a vision (an innumerable multitude from every nation). As with the Lion/Lamb contrast, what is heard and what is seen may describe the same reality from different perspectives — the sealed community of God's people is both defined (rooted in Israel's covenant identity) and unlimited (encompassing all nations). The tribal list is unusual: Dan is omitted and Manasseh is included separately from Joseph, which has generated extensive scholarly discussion. The final verses (15-17) anticipate the new creation vision of chapters 21-22.*

**Translation Friction:** *Whether the 144,000 and the great multitude are the same group described differently or two distinct groups is debated. We render both visions as written without resolving the relationship. The omission of Dan from the tribal list has been variously explained (a scribal error, a tradition associating Dan with idolatry, an association with the Antichrist); we note it without adopting a position. The phrase 'the great tribulation' (tēs thlipseōs tēs megalēs) is rendered with the article as it appears in Greek.*

**Connections:** *Ezekiel 9:4-6 (marking foreheads for protection), Ezekiel 37:15-28 (reunification of Israel's tribes), Isaiah 49:10 (no hunger or thirst), Isaiah 25:8 (God will wipe away tears), Psalm 23:1-2 (shepherd, still waters), Zechariah 6:5 (four winds), Leviticus 23:40 (palm branches at Sukkot/Tabernacles), Joel 2:32 (whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be saved).*

1After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. 2Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, holding the seal of the living God. He called out with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the earth and the sea, 3Indeed, declaring, Hurt not the world, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. 4And I heard the number of the sealed: 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel: 5From the tribe of Juda, twelve thousand were sealed. From the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand were sealed. From the tribe of Gad, twelve thousand were sealed. 6From the tribe of Aser, twelve thousand were sealed. From the tribe of Nephtalim, twelve thousand were sealed. From the tribe of Manasses, twelve thousand were sealed. 7From the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand were sealed. From the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand were sealed. From the tribe of Issachar, twelve thousand were sealed. 8From the tribe of Zabulon, twelve thousand were sealed. From the tribe of Joseph, twelve thousand were sealed. From the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed. 9After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude

that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands.

<sup>10</sup>They cried out in a loud voice:

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

<sup>11</sup>And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, <sup>12</sup>Indeed, declaring, Amen — Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and authority, and might, be to our God for ever and ever. Amen. <sup>13</sup>Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "These who are clothed in white robes — who are they, and where did they come from?" <sup>14</sup>I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. <sup>15</sup>For this reason they are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple, and the one seated on the throne will shelter them with his presence. <sup>16</sup>They will hunger no more and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat, <sup>17</sup>Because the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne will feed them, and will lead them to living fountains of waters — and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes.

#### TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The 'four corners of the earth' (tas tessaras gōnias tēs gēs) is a standard ancient expression for the whole world (cf. Isaiah 11:12; Ezekiel 7:2), not a cosmological claim about the earth's shape. The four winds (tessaras anemous) represent destructive forces held in check by divine command (cf. Jeremiah 49:36; Daniel 7:2; Zechariah 6:5). The three domains — earth, sea, trees — represent the totality of the natural world. The restraining of the winds creates a dramatic pause before the sealing, ensuring God's servants are protected before judgment proceeds.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 11:12. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Ezekiel 7:2. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Jeremiah 49:36. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Daniel 7:2. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Zechariah 6:5. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
2. The angel ascends 'from the rising of the sun' (apo anatolēs hēliou) — the east, the direction of dawn and new beginnings. The 'seal of the living God' (sphragida theou zōntos) echoes Ezekiel 9:4, where a man with a writing case marks the foreheads of those in Jerusalem who grieve over its abominations, protecting them from the coming slaughter. The phrase 'living God' (theou zōntos) contrasts with the dead idols that pervade the Roman world — this God is active and capable of protecting his own.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Ezekiel 9:4. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
3. The sealing (sphragisōmen) on the forehead is a mark of ownership and protection — like a royal seal on a document declaring its origin and inviolability. In Ezekiel 9:4, the mark (Hebrew tav, which in ancient script looked like an X or +) protected the faithful from destruction. The seal does not prevent suffering (the great multitude in verse 14 has come 'out of the great tribulation') but guarantees ultimate preservation. The first-person plural 'we have sealed' (sphragisōmen) suggests the angel speaks on behalf of a divine company.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Ezekiel 9:4 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. John hears (ēkousa) the number — he does not see it. As in 5:5-6 (hearing 'Lion,' seeing 'Lamb'), what John hears may be interpreted by what he sees (the innumerable multitude in v. 9). The number 144,000 (12 x 12 x 1,000) is a symbolic number of completeness: twelve tribes times twelve (perhaps twelve apostles) times one thousand (a large, round number representing fullness). Whether this represents ethnic Israel, the church as spiritual Israel, or a specific end-time remnant is debated. We render the text as stated.

5. Judah is listed first rather than Reuben (the firstborn), likely because Judah is the messianic tribe — the tribe of the Lamb. The list departs from every Old Testament tribal order, creating a unique arrangement that prioritizes Judah and includes Levi (normally omitted from territorial lists because the Levites had no tribal land allotment).
6. Manasseh is listed separately from Joseph (v. 8), which is unusual — normally Manasseh and Ephraim together constitute Joseph. The separate listing of Manasseh and Joseph (without Ephraim) maintains the count of twelve while substituting for the omitted tribe of Dan.
7. The inclusion of Levi is notable — in Old Testament territorial lists, Levi is typically excluded because the Levites received no land inheritance, being set apart for priestly service (Numbers 18:20-24). Their inclusion here suggests that the list is not based on territorial divisions but on a new ordering of God's people.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Numbers 18:20-24. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. The list ends with Benjamin, completing twelve tribes with each contributing exactly 12,000. The tribe of Dan is conspicuously absent — an omission that has generated much speculation. Some scholars point to Dan's association with idolatry (Judges 18:30; 1 Kings 12:29), an early tradition linking Dan to the Antichrist (based on a reading of Genesis 49:17 and Jeremiah 8:16), or a simple scribal error confusing Dan and Manasseh. The text does not explain the omission, and we do not speculate beyond noting it.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Judges 18:30 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References 1 Kings 12:29 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Genesis 49:17 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Jeremiah 8:16 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
9. The contrast with the 144,000 is striking: the previous group was precisely numbered and ethnically defined; this group is innumerable and universally sourced. John heard a number (v. 4) but now sees a countless crowd (v. 9) — the hear/see pattern that in chapter 5 revealed Lion and Lamb as the same reality viewed differently. The fourfold formula *ethnous, phylōn, laōn, glōssōn* ('nation, tribe, people, language') echoes 5:9. The palm branches (*phoinikes*) recall the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*, Leviticus 23:40), a celebration of God's provision during the wilderness wandering, and also the triumphal entry traditions.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Leviticus 23:40. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
10. The Greek *hē sōtēria tō theō* ('salvation to our God') can mean 'salvation belongs to God' (attributing salvation to its source) or 'salvation/praise to our God' (an acclamation). The multitude credits their deliverance jointly to God and the Lamb — as in chapter 5, the two receive unified worship. The cry is the multitude's answer to the question of 6:17 ('who is able to stand?') — those who attribute their salvation to God and the Lamb are the ones who stand.
11. The concentric arrangement reappears: throne at the center, living creatures and elders next, angels surrounding them, and the great multitude beyond. The angels respond to the multitude's cry by falling prostrate (*epesan epi ta prosōpa autōn*, 'fell on their faces') — a posture of complete submission and reverence.
12. A sevenfold doxology — blessing (*eulogia*), glory (*doxa*), wisdom (*sophia*), thanksgiving (*eucharistia*), honor (*timē*), power (*dynamis*), and might (*ischys*) — framed by double 'Amen.' The seven attributes parallel the sevenfold praise to the Lamb in 5:12, with slight variations (thanksgiving replaces wealth). The framing 'Amen...Amen' seals the praise with absolute affirmation. The angels ascribe to God the totality of praise — seven attributes representing completeness.
13. The elder's question is pedagogical — he asks in order to teach, a common technique in apocalyptic literature (cf. Zechariah 4:4-5; Daniel 7:16). The Greek *apekrithē* ('answered') can mean 'responded' or 'spoke up' even without a prior question from John, as it does here.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Zechariah 4:4-5 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Daniel 7:16 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
14. John's reply 'my lord, you know' (*kyrie mou, sy oidas*) is respectful deference, not divine address — *kyrie* here is a polite title for the elder. The phrase 'the great tribulation' (*tēs thlipseōs tēs megalēs*) has the definite article, indicating a specific, known period of suffering. The present participle *hoi erchomenoi* ('the ones coming') suggests an ongoing process, not a single past event — they are continually arriving. The paradox of washing robes white in blood is striking: blood normally stains, but the Lamb's blood purifies. The image combines sacrifice (blood) with cleansing (washing white), echoing Isaiah 1:18 ('though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow').

14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 1:18. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
15. The verb *latreuouein* ('they serve, worship') is cultic language — priestly service in the temple. Day and night service echoes the Levitical priests' perpetual ministry (1 Chronicles 9:33). The verb *skēnōsei* ('will tabernacle, will spread his tent over') is related to *skēnē* ('tent, tabernacle') and evokes the Shekinah — God's dwelling presence among his people. The concept echoes John 1:14 ('the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us') and anticipates Revelation 21:3 ('the tabernacle of God is with humanity'). We render it as 'shelter with his presence' to capture both the protective and relational dimensions.
15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes 1 Chronicles 9:33 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
16. This verse quotes Isaiah 49:10 almost verbatim from the Septuagint: 'They will not hunger or thirst, neither will the scorching heat or the sun strike them.' The Isaiah passage describes the return from exile — God's people journeying home under divine protection. The application to the great multitude frames their experience as a new exodus, a journey through tribulation to the promised presence of God. The negations are emphatic: no more hunger, no more thirst, no more exposure to harsh elements.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 49:10. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
17. The paradox of a lamb shepherding is striking — normally lambs are shepherded, not shepherds. Yet the Lamb who was slaughtered now leads and protects. The verb *poimanei* ('will shepherd') echoes Psalm 23:1 ('The LORD is my shepherd') and Ezekiel 34:23 ('I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David'). 'Springs of living water' (*zōēs pēgas hydatōn*) echoes Jeremiah 2:13 ('the spring of living water') and anticipates 21:6 and 22:1 (the river of life). The final image — God wiping tears from their eyes — comes from Isaiah 25:8 and is repeated in Revelation 21:4, forming an *inclusio* between this interlude and the new creation vision. The intimacy of the gesture is remarkable: the sovereign God of the universe personally attending to human grief.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 25:8. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Psalm 23:1. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Ezekiel 34:23. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Jeremiah 2:13. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.

## 8

**Summary:** *Revelation 8 opens with the seventh seal, which produces a dramatic half-hour silence in heaven. Seven angels are given seven trumpets. Another angel with a golden censer offers incense mingled with the prayers of the saints on the golden altar, then fills the censer with fire from the altar and hurls it to earth, producing thunder, lightning, rumblings, and an earthquake. The first four trumpets sound in sequence: the first brings hail and fire mixed with blood, burning a third of the earth and trees; the second causes something like a great burning mountain to fall into the sea, turning a third of it to blood; the third sends a blazing star called Wormwood into the rivers, poisoning a third of the waters; the fourth strikes a third of the sun, moon, and stars, darkening them. The chapter closes with an eagle flying through the sky, crying 'Woe, woe, woe' to those on earth because of the remaining three trumpets.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The half-hour silence after the seventh seal is unique in Revelation's relentless visionary movement. It may echo the silence before creation, the awe-struck silence of the heavenly court (cf. Habakkuk 2:20, Zephaniah 1:7, Zechariah 2:13), or the breathless pause before the Day of the LORD. The incense-prayer-judgment sequence (vv. 3-5) explicitly connects the prayers of the saints to the execution of judgment — the martyrs' cry of 6:10 is being answered. The trumpet judgments echo the Egyptian plagues (hail, water to blood, darkness) but are limited to a third of creation, indicating restrained judgment that leaves room for repentance.*

**Translation Friction:** *The relationship between the seals, trumpets, and bowls (ch. 16) is debated: sequential, recapitulatory, or telescoping. We render each vision as it stands. The 'great mountain burning with fire' (v. 8) and 'great star blazing like a torch' (v. 10) are described with *hōs* ('like, as if'), maintaining their visionary, symbolic character. We render the imagery as presented without naturalistic interpretation.*

Connections: *Exodus 7-10 (Egyptian plagues: hail, water to blood, darkness), Ezekiel 10:2 (coals from the altar), Joel 2:30-31 (blood, fire, columns of smoke), Jeremiah 9:15, 23:15 (wormwood), Amos 5:7, 6:12 (justice turned to wormwood), Habakkuk 2:20 (silence before the LORD), Exodus 30:1-10 (golden altar of incense), Isaiah 14:12 (fallen star).*

<sup>1</sup>When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. <sup>2</sup>Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. <sup>3</sup>Another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer. He was given a large quantity of incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne. <sup>4</sup>The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the angel's hand. <sup>5</sup>Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake. <sup>6</sup>Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them. <sup>7</sup>The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was thrown to the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up. <sup>8</sup>The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. <sup>9</sup>A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. <sup>10</sup>The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. <sup>11</sup>The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the water because it had been made bitter. <sup>12</sup>The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light was darkened. A third of the day was without light, and likewise a third of the night. <sup>13</sup>Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, crying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining trumpet blasts that the three angels are about to sound!"

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. After chapters of praise, thunder, and acclamation, the silence (sigē) is startling. The Greek hēmiōrion ('half an hour') is the only time reference in the heavenly visions. The silence may reflect the tradition of reverent stillness before God (Habakkuk 2:20, 'Let all the earth be silent before him'; Zephaniah 1:7, 'Be silent before the Lord GOD'; Zechariah 2:13, 'Be still before the LORD'). Jewish tradition held that angels cease their praise in heaven during moments when God listens to human prayers — the silence may create space for the saints' prayers to be heard (vv. 3-4).
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Habakkuk 2:20. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Zephaniah 1:7. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Zechariah 2:13. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
2. The definite article 'the seven angels' (tous hepta angelous) suggests a recognized group — possibly the archangels known from Jewish tradition (Tobit 12:15, 'I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels who present the prayers of the saints'). The trumpets (salpiggēs) recall the trumpets at Sinai (Exodus 19:16, 19), the trumpets at Jericho (Joshua 6:4-20), and the eschatological trumpet of Joel 2:1 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16. In ancient Israel, trumpets summoned to worship, announced war, and heralded the king.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Exodus 19:16. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Joshua 6:4-20. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Joel 2:1. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
3. The angel performs a priestly function — offering incense on the golden altar, which in the tabernacle/temple stood directly before the Holy of Holies (Exodus 30:1-10). The incense is added to (not substituted for) the prayers of the saints — the prayers are already there (cf. 5:8), and the incense mingles with them. The 'golden altar before the throne' (to thysiastērion to chrysoun to enōpion tou thronou) corresponds to the altar of incense in the earthly tabernacle, now revealed in its heavenly archetype.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Exodus 30:1-10 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.

4. The visual image is powerful: the smoke carrying the prayers ascends into God's presence. The prayers are not merely spoken and forgotten but physically rise to God. This echoes Psalm 141:2 ('Let my prayer be set before you like incense; the lifting up of my hands like the evening sacrifice'). The scene makes the theological claim that human prayer reaches God and has consequences — the fire that follows (v. 5) is the divine response to those prayers.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Psalm 141:2. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
5. The same censer that carried prayers upward now carries fire downward — the connection between prayer and judgment is direct. The fire from the altar echoes Ezekiel 10:2, where coals from between the cherubim are scattered over Jerusalem in judgment. The thunder, rumblings, lightning, and earthquake reprise the Sinai-theophany pattern from 4:5, now with the addition of an earthquake (seismos). This formula recurs at 11:19 and 16:18, each time with intensification.
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Ezekiel 10:2 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
6. The preparation (hētoimasan) creates a moment of anticipation before the first trumpet blast. The deliberate sequence — silence, prayer, fire, preparation — slows the narrative pace, building tension before the rapid succession of trumpet judgments.
7. The first trumpet echoes the seventh Egyptian plague — hail mixed with fire (Exodus 9:23-24). The addition of blood intensifies the image beyond the Exodus account, recalling Joel 2:30 ('blood and fire and columns of smoke'). The destruction is limited to a third (to triton) — a recurring fraction in the trumpet judgments that indicates severe but not total devastation. The SBLGNT includes 'a third of the earth was burned up' (to triton tēs gēs katekae), which some manuscripts lack; we follow the critical text.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Exodus 9:23-24. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Joel 2:30. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. The simile hōs oros mega ('like a great mountain') maintains the visionary quality — John describes what he sees without claiming to know exactly what it is. The sea turning to blood echoes the first Egyptian plague (Exodus 7:20-21). The 'burning mountain' may recall Jeremiah 51:25, where Babylon is called a 'destroying mountain' that God will turn into a 'burned-out mountain.' The destruction moves from land (first trumpet) to sea (second trumpet), systematically affecting the created order.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Exodus 7:20-21 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Jeremiah 51:25 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
9. The scope of destruction includes both marine life (ktismatōn...ta echonta psychas, 'creatures having life/soul') and human commerce (ploiōn, 'ships'). The destruction of ships represents economic devastation — maritime trade was the backbone of the Roman economy, and the loss of a third of shipping would be catastrophic. The pattern of 'one-third' continues, emphasizing that the judgment, while severe, is not total annihilation.
10. The progression continues: land, sea, now fresh water. The falling star (astēr megas) burning like a torch (lampas) moves the destruction from sea to rivers and springs — the sources of drinking water. Stars falling from heaven echo Isaiah 14:12 (the fall of the king of Babylon, 'How you have fallen from heaven, morning star') and may also recall the ancient association of stars with angelic beings (cf. Revelation 1:20; 12:4). The shift from salt water to fresh water intensifies the threat to human survival.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Isaiah 14:12 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
11. Apsinthos ('Wormwood') is a bitter plant (*Artemisia absinthium*) that was proverbially associated with bitterness and suffering. In Jeremiah 9:15 and 23:15, God threatens to feed Israel 'wormwood' and give them 'poisoned water to drink' as punishment for following false prophets. In Amos 5:7 and 6:12, justice turned to 'wormwood' describes the perversion of what should sustain life into what destroys it. The naming of the star gives the judgment a personal, identifiable character. The verb epikranthēsān ('were made bitter') describes the transformation of life-giving water into death-dealing poison.
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Jeremiah 9:15. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Amos 5:7. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
12. The fourth trumpet echoes the ninth Egyptian plague — darkness (Exodus 10:21-23). The progression of the first four trumpets covers the created order systematically: land and vegetation (1st), sea and marine life (2nd), fresh water (3rd), and celestial bodies (4th). This mirrors the creation sequence of Genesis 1 in reverse — an undoing of creation. The fraction 'one-third' applies to light itself — the most fundamental element of the created order (Genesis 1:3-5). The result is a diminishment of the cosmos, not yet its destruction.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Exodus 10:21-23. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.

12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Genesis 1. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
13. The SBLGNT reads *aetou* ('eagle') rather than *angelou* ('angel'), which is the reading of some later manuscripts reflected in the KJV. An eagle (or vulture — *aetos* can mean either) flying in midheaven (*mesouranēmati*, the point of the sky directly overhead, where the sun stands at noon) would be visible to all. The threefold 'woe' (*ouai ouai ouai*) corresponds to the three remaining trumpets — the fifth, sixth, and seventh — which will be called the three 'woes' (9:12; 11:14). The phrase 'those who dwell on the earth' (*tous katoikountas epi tēs gēs*) is Revelation's recurring designation for humanity in rebellion against God.

## 9

**Summary:** *Revelation 9 describes the fifth and sixth trumpet judgments — the first two 'woes.'* The fifth trumpet (vv. 1-12): a star fallen from heaven opens the shaft of the abyss, releasing smoke that darkens the sun and air, and from the smoke emerge locust-like creatures with scorpion power. They are commanded not to harm vegetation but only those who do not have God's seal on their foreheads. They torment people for five months but do not kill them; people will seek death but not find it. The locusts are described in terrifying composite imagery — faces like human faces, hair like women's hair, teeth like lions' teeth, breastplates of iron, wings like chariots rushing to battle. Their king is the angel of the abyss, named Abaddon in Hebrew and Apollyon in Greek. The sixth trumpet (vv. 13-21): a voice from the golden altar commands the release of four angels bound at the great river Euphrates, prepared for a specific hour, day, month, and year, to kill a third of humanity. A cavalry of 200 million with horses bearing lion heads and serpent tails kills through fire, smoke, and sulfur. Yet the rest of humanity does not repent of their idolatry, murders, sorcery, sexual immorality, or theft.

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The locust vision draws on Joel 1-2 (the locust plague as the Day of the LORD), but transforms natural locusts into supernatural beings of torment. The composite description — combining human, animal, and military features — is characteristic of apocalyptic symbolism and should be rendered as written, not decoded into specific modern equivalents. The Euphrates River was the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire and the traditional invasion route from Parthia, Rome's great rival — the sixth trumpet evokes the terror of invasion from beyond civilization's borders. The chapter's climax is theological: despite all these judgments, the survivors do not repent (vv. 20-21). The purpose of judgment is to provoke repentance, but the human heart resists.*

**Translation Friction:** *The composite imagery of the locusts defies naturalistic interpretation and should be rendered symbolically as John describes it. The number 200 million (*dismyriades myriadōn*, literally 'two myriads of myriads') is an enormous figure that may be symbolic of an incalculable army rather than a literal count. The names Abaddon/Apollyon are translated in the text itself; we retain both names as given.*

**Connections:** *Joel 1:2-2:11 (locust plague), Exodus 10:12-15 (Egyptian locust plague), Daniel 7 (composite beasts), Genesis 15:18, Deuteronomy 1:7 (Euphrates as boundary), Isaiah 5:26-30 (invading army from afar), Jeremiah 51:27 (armies from the north), Psalm 115:4-8, 135:15-18 (idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone, wood).*

<sup>1</sup>The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from heaven to earth, and the key to the shaft of the abyss was given to him. <sup>2</sup>He opened the shaft of the abyss, and smoke rose from the shaft like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke from the shaft. <sup>3</sup>From the smoke, locusts came down on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth. <sup>4</sup>They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup>They were allowed to torment them for five months but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a person. <sup>6</sup>In those days people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them. <sup>7</sup>In appearance the locusts were like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were what looked like crowns of gold, and their faces were like human faces. <sup>8</sup>They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. <sup>9</sup>They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of many horse-drawn chariots rushing into battle. <sup>10</sup>They have tails and stings like scorpions, and in their tails is their power to harm people for five months. <sup>11</sup>They have as king over them the angel of the abyss. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon. <sup>12</sup>The first woe has

passed. Two woes are still to come after this. <sup>13</sup>The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar that is before God, <sup>14</sup>Indeed, declaring to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the remarkable river Euphrates. <sup>15</sup>So the four angels were released, who had been prepared for this hour, day, month, and year, to kill a third of humanity. <sup>16</sup>The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million; I heard their number. <sup>17</sup>And this is how I saw the horses in the vision and their riders: they wore breastplates the color of fire, dark blue, and sulfur yellow. The heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and sulfur. <sup>18</sup>By these three plagues a third of humanity was killed — by the fire, the smoke, and the sulfur coming out of their mouths. <sup>19</sup>For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents, with heads, and with them they inflict harm. <sup>20</sup>The rest of humanity, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands or stop worshiping demons and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood — which cannot see or hear or walk. <sup>21</sup>And they did not repent of their murders, their sorceries, their sexual immorality, or their thefts.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The star (astera) is personified — 'him' (autō) — indicating an angelic or demonic being, not a literal celestial body. The perfect participle peptōkota ('having fallen') indicates a completed fall, not one in progress — this star has already fallen. The 'abyss' (abyssou) in Revelation is the prison of demonic forces (cf. 11:7; 17:8; 20:1-3). The 'shaft' (phreatos) suggests a well or pit with a covering that can be opened and closed. The divine passive edothē ('was given') indicates that even this destructive action operates under God's permission.
2. The smoke (kapnos) obscuring sun and air recalls the pillar of smoke at Sinai (Exodus 19:18, 'Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace'). The same vocabulary (kaminos, 'furnace') appears in both passages. But whereas the Sinai smoke signaled God's presence, this smoke releases destructive forces — a dark inversion. The darkening of the sky by smoke continues the darkness motif from the fourth trumpet (8:12).
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Exodus 19:18. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
3. The locusts (akrides) emerge from the abyss, not from the natural world — they are demonic entities in locust form. Their power is compared to scorpions (skorpioi), combining two of the most feared creatures in the ancient Near East. The divine passive edothē ('was given') again emphasizes that their power is delegated, not inherent. The locust plague echoes Joel 1-2, where a devastating locust invasion prefigures the Day of the LORD.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Joel 1-2 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. Natural locusts devour vegetation; these supernatural locusts are commanded to leave vegetation alone and target humans instead — a complete inversion of natural behavior that marks them as demonic rather than natural. The exemption of those with God's seal (tēn sphragida tou theou) connects directly to the sealing of the 144,000 in 7:3-4. God's servants are protected from demonic torment even in the midst of worldwide suffering.
5. The five-month period (mēnas pente) may correspond to the typical lifespan of locusts (roughly May through September). The torment (basanismos) is agonizing but not lethal — a carefully limited judgment. The verb basanisthēsontai ('they will be tormented') is the same word used for the testing of gold in fire and for the interrogation of prisoners. The scorpion sting comparison specifies the type of suffering: intense, burning pain that incapacitates but does not kill.
6. The double statement — seeking death, longing to die — emphasizes the extremity of the torment. Death personified as fleeing (pheugei, present tense — it keeps fleeing) inverts the normal human experience where death is the pursuer and life flees. This echoes Job 3:21 ('who long for death, but it does not come, who search for it more than for hidden treasure'). The irony is that those who 'dwell on the earth' (the ones opposed to God throughout Revelation) sought security in earthly things; now even death offers no escape.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Job 3:21. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. The description begins a composite portrait that combines features from Joel 2:4 ('They have the appearance of horses; they gallop along like cavalry'). The repeated use of hōs and homoios ('like, resembling') — at least seven times in vv. 7-10 — maintains the visionary quality. John is describing what he sees in terms of the closest analogies he can find. The 'crowns of gold' (hōs stephanoi homoioi chrysō) suggest authority or victory, though the qualifier 'what looked like' indicates they are not actual crowns. Human faces suggest intelligence or cunning.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Joel 2:4. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. The hair 'like women's hair' (hōs trichas gynaikōn) may refer to the locusts' antennae, which could suggest flowing hair, or may evoke a sense of the uncanny — a blurring of categories that makes these creatures more disturbing. The lion's teeth echo Joel 1:6 ('It has the teeth of a lion, the fangs of a lioness'), directly linking these creatures to Joel's locust-plague prophecy. The combination of human faces, flowing hair, and predatory teeth creates a composite that is deliberately disorienting.

8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Joel 1:6 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
9. The iron breastplates (thōrakas hōs thōrakas sidērous) suggest invulnerability — these creatures cannot be fought or stopped. The thunderous sound of their wings echoes Joel 2:5 ('like the noise of chariots, they leap over the mountaintops, like the crackling of fire consuming stubble, like a mighty army drawn up for battle'). The cumulative effect of the description is of an unstoppable, invulnerable, terrifying army that combines the worst features of insects, predators, warriors, and supernatural beings.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Joel 2:5. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
10. The description circles back to the scorpion imagery of verse 3, creating a frame around the composite portrait. The five-month period is repeated from verse 5, confirming the limited duration. Their power (exousia, 'authority') resides in their tails — the part that delivers the sting. The description has moved from head to tail: golden crowns, human faces, women's hair, lion's teeth, iron breastplates, chariot-wing sound, and scorpion tails — a top-to-bottom portrait of supernatural terror.
11. Both names mean 'Destroyer' — Abaddon from the Hebrew root 'b-d ('to perish, destroy') and Apollyon from the Greek apollymi ('to destroy'). In the Old Testament, Abaddon is a place — the realm of the dead (Job 26:6; 28:22; 31:12; Psalm 88:11; Proverbs 15:11; 27:20). Here it becomes a personal name for the ruler of that realm. Some scholars see a wordplay on Apollo (Apollōn), the Greco-Roman deity claimed as patron by several Roman emperors — if so, this is a subversive identification of the imperial god with the king of the underworld. Proverbs 30:27 states that 'locusts have no king,' making these supernatural locusts a deliberate contrast to natural ones.
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Job 26:6. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Psalm 88:11. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Proverbs 15:11. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Proverbs 30:27. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
12. This editorial interjection marks the structural division of the three woes announced by the eagle in 8:13. The fifth trumpet = first woe; the sixth trumpet = second woe (11:14); the seventh trumpet = third woe (11:15ff). The phrase 'two woes are still to come' (erchetai eti duo ouai) maintains the escalating tension — if the locust plague was only the first woe, the remaining judgments will be worse.
13. The voice comes from the golden altar of incense — the same altar where the saints' prayers were offered in 8:3-4. The connection implies that the sixth trumpet is a response to those prayers, specifically the martyrs' cry in 6:10 ('How long...until you avenge our blood?'). The 'four horns' (tessarōn keratōn) of the altar are the projections at its four corners (cf. Exodus 30:2-3), where sacrificial blood was applied. The SBLGNT brackets tessarōn ('four'), as it is absent in some manuscripts, but the reading is well-attested.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Exodus 30:2-3 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
14. These four angels (tous tessaras angelous) are distinct from the four angels of 7:1 who hold back the winds — these are 'bound' (dedemenous), suggesting they are malevolent beings restrained by divine authority. The Euphrates (Euphratē) was the traditional eastern boundary of both the promised land (Genesis 15:18; Deuteronomy 1:7) and the Roman Empire. Enemies from beyond the Euphrates — Assyria, Babylon, Parthia — were the archetypal invading threat throughout Israel's history. The release of these angels symbolizes the unleashing of forces from beyond the boundary of the known world.
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Genesis 15:18. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Deuteronomy 1:7. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
15. The fourfold time specification — hour, day, month, year — emphasizes divine precision. These angels were prepared for this exact moment (hētoimasmenoi, 'having been prepared' — perfect passive, indicating prior divine arrangement). The killing of 'a third of humanity' (to triton tōn anthrōpōn) escalates beyond the trumpet pattern of damaging a third of creation to the direct killing of a third of the human race. Where the fifth trumpet tormented but did not kill, the sixth trumpet kills on a massive scale.
16. The Greek dismyriades myriadōn literally means 'two ten-thousands of ten-thousands' — 200,000,000. This number far exceeds any ancient army (the entire Roman Empire may have had only 50-70 million inhabitants). The staggering figure likely represents an innumerable, overwhelming force rather than a precise count. John specifies 'I heard their number' (ēkousa ton arithmon autōn) — the number was told to him, not counted by him, underscoring its symbolic character.
17. The breastplates are described by three colors matching the three agents of death: fire-red (pyrinous), dark blue like hyacinth (hyakinthinous, the deep blue of smoke), and sulfur-yellow (theiōdeis). Fire, smoke, and sulfur (pyr kai kapnos kai theion) recall the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24-28), establishing this as divine judgment. The lion heads continue the predatory imagery — these horses are weapons, not transport. John frames this as 'what I saw in the vision' (en tē horasei), reminding the reader of the visionary medium.

17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Genesis 19:24-28. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
18. The three destructive agents are called 'plagues' (plēgōn), the same word used for the Egyptian plagues in the Septuagint. The identification of fire, smoke, and sulfur as distinct 'plagues' formalizes what verses 15 and 17 described visually. The repetition of 'a third' (to triton) maintains the pattern established throughout the trumpet sequence — severe but not total destruction.
19. The horses are deadly at both ends — fire from their mouths and serpent-tails that bite. Like the locusts of verses 7-10, the description defies natural categories. The serpent tails (homoiai ophesin, 'like snakes') add another layer to the composite imagery and may evoke the primordial serpent of Genesis 3. The description of tails 'having heads' (echousai kephalas) is deliberately unsettling — these are creatures designed to harm from every direction.
19. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Genesis 3. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
20. This is the theological climax of the chapter — the purpose of judgment was to provoke repentance, but the survivors refuse to turn. The critique of idolatry (ta eidōla ta chrysa kai ta argyra kai ta chalka kai ta lithina kai ta xylina) echoes Daniel 5:23 and Psalm 115:4-8 / 135:15-18, which mock idols that 'have eyes but cannot see, ears but cannot hear.' The list of materials descends in value (gold, silver, bronze, stone, wood), suggesting the absurdity of exchanging the living God for increasingly worthless substitutes. Behind the idols stand 'demons' (daimonia) — the worship appears religious but serves destructive spiritual realities.
20. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Daniel 5:23 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
20. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Psalm 115:4-8 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
21. Four sins are listed alongside idolatry from verse 20: murders (phonōn), sorceries (pharmakōn), sexual immorality (porneias), and thefts (klemmatōn). The Greek pharmakōn (from which 'pharmacy' derives) refers to the use of drugs, potions, and spells — sorcery in the ancient world often involved pharmacological substances used in magical rituals. These four sins roughly correspond to violations of the second table of the Decalogue (murder, false worship through magic, adultery, theft). The double statement of non-repentance (verses 20 and 21) frames the human response as tragically, stubbornly defiant in the face of overwhelming evidence of divine power.

# 10

**Summary:** *Revelation 10 provides an interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets, paralleling the interlude between the sixth and seventh seals (chapter 7). A mighty angel descends from heaven, wrapped in a cloud with a rainbow over his head, his face like the sun and legs like pillars of fire. He holds a small open scroll, places his right foot on the sea and left foot on the land, and shouts like a lion. Seven thunders speak, but John is commanded to seal up what they said and not write it down. The angel then swears by the Creator that there will be no more delay — when the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, the mystery of God will be fulfilled. John is told to take the scroll from the angel and eat it; it is sweet in his mouth but bitter in his stomach. He is told he must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages, and kings.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The 'mighty angel' (angelos ischyros) has features reminiscent of Christ's description in chapter 1 (face like the sun, cloud, authority over sea and land) and of the angel of Daniel 10 and 12. His stance on sea and land claims authority over the entire earth. The sealed seven thunders are unique in Revelation — every other vision is recorded, but this one is suppressed, suggesting that not all of God's purposes are revealed. The eating of the scroll directly parallels Ezekiel 2:8-3:3, where Ezekiel eats a scroll that is sweet as honey — John's experience adds the element of bitterness, reflecting the mixed content of prophetic proclamation (sweet truth, bitter judgment).*

**Translation Friction:** *The identity of the 'mighty angel' is debated: some identify him as Christ, others as a powerful angel (like Michael). The divine features could describe either a theophany or an angel bearing divine glory. We render the text as written without identifying the figure beyond what the text states. The seven thunders remain sealed — any attempt to identify their content is speculation, and we note the deliberate concealment.*

**Connections:** *Daniel 10:5-6 (angelic figure), Daniel 12:7 (angel standing on water, swearing by the eternal God), Ezekiel 2:8-3:3 (eating the scroll), Exodus 20:11, Nehemiah 9:6 (God as Creator of heaven, earth, and sea), Amos 3:7-8 (the lion roars, the Lord GOD has spoken), Psalm 29:3-9 (the voice of the LORD as thunder).*

<sup>1</sup>Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head. His face was like the sun, and his legs were like pillars of fire. <sup>2</sup>He held a small scroll open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, <sup>3</sup>He shouted in a loud voice, like a lion roaring. When he shouted, seven thunders spoke with their own voices. <sup>4</sup>When the seven thunders had spoken, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down." <sup>5</sup>Then the angel whom I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven <sup>6</sup>Swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created the heavens above, and the things that therein are, and the world, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: <sup>7</sup>But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets." <sup>8</sup>Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, "Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land." <sup>9</sup>So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the small scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey." <sup>10</sup>I took the small scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned bitter. <sup>11</sup>Then they said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages, and kings."

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The angel's description echoes multiple Old Testament theophanies: the cloud recalls God's presence in the wilderness (Exodus 13:21-22); the rainbow recalls the throne-room vision (4:3) and God's covenant with Noah (Genesis 9:13); the sun-like face recalls both the transfiguration (Matthew 17:2) and the glorified Christ (1:16); the fire-pillars recall the pillar of fire that led Israel (Exodus 13:21). The word *allon* ('another') distinguishes this angel from the seven trumpet angels. The Greek *podes* can mean 'feet' or 'legs'; given the pillar imagery, 'legs' better conveys the visual impression.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Exodus 13:21-22. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Genesis 9:13. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
2. The 'small scroll' (*biblaridion*, a diminutive of *biblion*) is open (*ēneōgmenon*), in contrast to the sealed scroll of chapter 5. Whether this is the same scroll now unsealed or a different document is debated. The colossus-like stance — one foot on the sea, one on the land — claims authority over the entire created world. The imagery echoes the ancient concept of a conqueror placing his foot on conquered territory (cf. Joshua 10:24). The verb *ethēken* ('planted, set') suggests a firm, deliberate placement.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Joshua 10:24. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
3. The lion's roar (*hōsper leōn mykatai*) echoes Amos 3:8 ('The lion has roared — who will not fear? The Sovereign LORD has spoken — who can but prophesy?') and Hosea 11:10 ('He will roar like a lion. When he roars, his children will come trembling from the west'). The 'seven thunders' (*hai hepta brontai*) are introduced with the definite article, as if they are a recognized group — possibly related to the sevenfold voice of the LORD in Psalm 29, where 'the voice of the LORD' (*qol YHWH*) appears seven times, accompanied by thunder.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Amos 3:8 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Hosea 11:10 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Psalm 29 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. This is the only instance in Revelation where John is told not to write. Elsewhere he is repeatedly commanded to write (1:11, 19; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5). The sealing (*sphragison*) of the thunders' message contrasts with the unsealing of the scroll in chapter 5. The command establishes that there are aspects of God's plan that remain hidden — not every divine purpose is revealed to human knowledge. This echoes Daniel 12:4 ('seal up the words of the scroll until the time of the end') and Deuteronomy 29:29 ('the secret things belong to the LORD our God').
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Daniel 12:4. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Deuteronomy 29:29. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
5. The raising of the right hand is the gesture of a solemn oath (cf. Genesis 14:22; Deuteronomy 32:40; Daniel 12:7). The scene closely parallels Daniel 12:7, where 'the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever.' In Daniel, the angel swears about the timing of the end; here the angel makes a similar declaration about the fulfillment of God's

mystery.

5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Genesis 14:22 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Deuteronomy 32:40 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Daniel 12:7 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
6. The oath is sworn by the eternal Creator — the highest possible authority. The threefold creation formula (heaven and what is in it, earth and what is in it, sea and what is in it) echoes Exodus 20:11 and Nehemiah 9:6. The declaration *chronos ouketi estai* is better rendered 'there will be no more delay' than the KJV's 'time shall be no more' — the Greek *chronos* here means 'time of waiting' or 'interval of delay,' not time itself. The martyrs' cry 'how long?' (6:10) is finally being answered: no more waiting.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Exodus 20:11. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Nehemiah 9:6. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. The 'mystery of God' (to *mystērion tou theou*) is his complete redemptive plan — the same concept Paul uses in Romans 16:25-26 and Ephesians 3:3-6. The verb *etelesthē* ('will be fulfilled, completed') is the same root as Christ's cry from the cross: *tetelestai* ('it is finished,' John 19:30). The verb *euēngelisen* ('announced good news, proclaimed as gospel') is striking — God's mystery was 'gospelled' to the prophets. The fulfillment of the mystery at the seventh trumpet connects to 11:15-18, where the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of God and of his Christ. The prophets (*tous prophētas*) refers to the Old Testament prophets who proclaimed this coming consummation (cf. Amos 3:7, 'Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets').
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Amos 3:7. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. The heavenly voice (from v. 4) now directs John to participate in the vision, not merely observe it. The instruction to 'take the scroll' (*labe to biblion*) transitions John from witness to actor. The angel's posture is reiterated — standing on sea and land — emphasizing the cosmic authority behind the scroll's contents.
9. The command to eat the scroll directly parallels Ezekiel 2:8-3:3, where God commands Ezekiel to eat a scroll containing 'lamentations, mourning, and woe' — and it tasted 'as sweet as honey.' John's experience adds the element of bitterness in the stomach (*pikranei sou tēn koilian*), which Ezekiel's account lacks. The scroll's sweetness represents the pleasure of receiving God's word; its bitterness represents the painful content of what must be proclaimed — judgment, suffering, and woe. The prophet must internalize the message before delivering it.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Ezekiel 2:8-3:3. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
10. The experience unfolds exactly as the angel predicted but in reverse order: he was told bitter-then-sweet, but he experiences sweet-then-bitter. The sweetness comes first — the initial reception of God's word is a delight (cf. Psalm 119:103, 'How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!'). The bitterness follows — the content of prophetic proclamation involves suffering and judgment. This sequence mirrors the experience of many prophets: called with joy, burdened by the message.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Psalm 119:103 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
11. The plural *legousin* ('they said') is unexpected — the angel was singular. The plural may indicate a heavenly council or may be an impersonal construction ('it was said to me'). The commission to 'prophesy again' (*palin prophēteusai*) recommissions John for the visions that follow, particularly chapters 11-22. The preposition *epi* can mean 'about, concerning' or 'before, in the presence of.' The fourfold formula (peoples, nations, languages, kings) varies the standard Revelation pattern, substituting 'kings' (*basileusin*) for 'tribes' — anticipating the prominent role of earthly kings in the visions to come.

## 11

**Summary:** *Revelation 11 opens with John being given a measuring rod and told to measure the temple of God and the altar but not the outer court, which has been given to the nations who will trample the holy city for forty-two months. Two witnesses are introduced who will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth. They are described as the two olive trees and two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. They have power to shut the sky, turn water to blood, and strike the earth with plagues. When they finish their testimony, the beast from the abyss kills them, and their bodies lie in the street of the great city for three and a half days while the earth's inhabitants celebrate. Then the breath of life from God enters them, they stand up, and a loud voice calls them up to heaven in a cloud while their enemies watch. A great earthquake destroys a tenth of the city, killing 7,000, and the survivors give glory to God. The second woe ends, and the seventh trumpet sounds, prompting heavenly voices to declare that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ. The twenty-four elders worship God, and the temple in heaven is opened, revealing the ark of the covenant amid lightning, thunder, earthquake, and hail.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The two witnesses combine features of Moses (turning water to blood, plagues) and Elijah (shutting the sky, fire from their mouths), the two great figures of the Law and the Prophets. Their identification as 'olive trees and lampstands' draws directly from Zechariah 4, where the olive trees represent anointed figures who serve the Lord. The forty-two months / 1,260 days / three and a half years is the same period found in Daniel 7:25, 9:27, and 12:7 — a time of trial and tribulation. The seventh trumpet brings not another judgment but the climactic declaration of God's kingdom — the 'mystery of God' announced in 10:7 is fulfilled. The ark of the covenant appearing in the heavenly temple connects to the lost ark of the earthly temple, suggesting that what was lost on earth is preserved in heaven.*

**Translation Friction:** *The identity of the two witnesses has generated extensive debate: literal future individuals, Moses and Elijah returned, the Law and the Prophets, the church's witness, or Israel and the church together. We render the text as written, noting the Mosaic and Elijahnic allusions. The 'great city' (v. 8) is 'spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified' — this identifies it as Jerusalem but in the language of prophetic condemnation. The measuring of the temple (vv. 1-2) may refer to the physical temple, the spiritual community, or both.*

**Connections:** *Zechariah 4:2-14 (two olive trees and lampstands), Daniel 7:25, 9:27, 12:7 (three and a half years), 1 Kings 17:1 (Elijah shuts the sky), Exodus 7:17-20 (Moses turns water to blood), 2 Kings 1:10-12 (Elijah calls fire from heaven), Ezekiel 37:5-10 (breath of life enters the dead), Ezekiel 40-42 (measuring the temple), Daniel 7:14, 27 (kingdom given to the saints), Psalm 2:1-2 (nations rage), Isaiah 26:20-21 (God comes to judge), Exodus 25:10-22 (ark of the covenant).*

<sup>1</sup>Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, <sup>2</sup>However, the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not. Since it is given to the Gentiles — and the holy city will they tread under foot forty and two months. <sup>3</sup>And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." <sup>4</sup>These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. <sup>5</sup>If anyone would harm them, fire comes from their mouths and consumes their enemies. If anyone would try to harm them, this is how that person must be killed. <sup>6</sup>They have the power to shut the sky so that no rain falls during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they wish. <sup>7</sup>When they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the abyss will make war on them and conquer them and kill them. <sup>8</sup>Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city that is symbolically called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. <sup>9</sup>For three and a half days, people from the peoples, tribes, languages, and nations will gaze at their bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb. <sup>10</sup>Those who dwell on the earth will gloat over them and celebrate and exchange gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who dwell on the earth. <sup>11</sup>But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. <sup>12</sup>Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here."

And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies watched. <sup>13</sup>At that moment a great earthquake struck, and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. <sup>14</sup>The second woe has passed. The third woe is coming soon.

<sup>15</sup>Then the seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying:

"The kingdom of the world has become  
the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ,  
and he will reign forever and ever!"

<sup>16</sup>Then the twenty-four elders, who sit before God on their thrones, fell on their faces and worshiped God, <sup>17</sup>Saying, We give you thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come. Because you have taken to you your remarkable authority, and hast reigned.

<sup>18</sup>The nations raged,  
but your wrath has come,  
and the time for the dead to be judged,  
and the time to reward your servants the prophets  
and the saints and those who fear your name,  
both small and great,  
and the time to destroy those who destroy the earth."

<sup>19</sup>Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

#### TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The measuring of the temple echoes Ezekiel 40-42, where an angelic figure measures the new temple in detail. In Ezekiel, measuring signifies preservation and divine ownership — what is measured is claimed and protected by God. The Greek *naon* (not *hieron*) specifically refers to the inner sanctuary, the dwelling place of God's presence, not the entire temple complex. The instruction to measure 'those who worship' (*tous proskynountas*) extends the protection to people, not just architecture — the faithful community is measured and preserved.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Ezekiel 40-42. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
2. The outer court (*tēn aulēn tēn exōthen*) — the Court of the Gentiles in the physical temple — is excluded from measurement, meaning it is not preserved but given over (*edothē*, divine passive) to the nations (*ethnesin*). The forty-two months (*mēnas tesserakonta duo*) equals 1,260 days (*v. 3*) and three and a half years — the period of tribulation drawn from Daniel 7:25, 9:27, and 12:7, where it represents a time of suffering under hostile powers. Luke 21:24 uses the same verb *patēsousin* ('trample') for the Gentile domination of Jerusalem. The distinction between the protected inner sanctuary and the exposed outer court may represent the preservation of God's true people amid the external suffering of the visible community.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Daniel 7:25. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
3. The speaker shifts to first person — God or Christ directly commissions the two witnesses. The 1,260 days equals forty-two months (at 30 days per month), the same period of Gentile trampling in verse 2 — the witnesses prophesy during the time of tribulation, not after it. Sackcloth (*sakkous*) is the garment of mourning, repentance, and prophetic lamentation (cf. Isaiah 20:2; Jonah 3:5-6). Their ministry is one of urgent warning, not celebration. The Greek *martyrsin* ('witnesses') is the same word that gives English 'martyr' — these witnesses will testify and die.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 20:2 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Jonah 3:5-6 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. This verse directly identifies the witnesses with the vision of Zechariah 4:2-14, where two olive trees flanking a golden lampstand represent 'the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of all the earth.' In Zechariah, the olive trees supply oil to the lampstand — they are sources of the Spirit's power. The identification of the witnesses as both olive trees (sources of the Spirit) and lampstands (bearers of light) combines the imagery. The phrase 'the Lord of the earth' (*tou kyriou tēs gēs*) echoes Zechariah 4:14 and asserts God's sovereignty over the world that persecutes his witnesses.

4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Zechariah 4:2-14. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
5. The fire from their mouths echoes 2 Kings 1:10-12, where Elijah calls fire from heaven on the soldiers sent to arrest him, and Jeremiah 5:14 ('I will make my words in your mouth a fire, and this people the wood it consumes'). The double statement ('if anyone would harm them...if anyone would try to harm them') emphasizes the inviolability of the witnesses during their appointed prophetic ministry. The verb *dei* ('must') indicates divine necessity — this is not arbitrary violence but the divinely ordained consequence of opposing God's witnesses.
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes 2 Kings 1:10-12 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Jeremiah 5:14 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
6. Two specific powers combine Moses and Elijah: shutting the sky from rain is Elijah's signature act (1 Kings 17:1; cf. James 5:17, 'Elijah prayed fervently that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months' — notably the same three-and-a-half-year period). Turning water to blood and sending plagues is Moses's role in the Exodus (Exodus 7:17-20; chapters 7-12). The witnesses embody the combined authority of the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah) — the two figures who appeared with Jesus at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:3). The phrase *hosákis ean thelēsōsin* ('as often as they wish') grants them extraordinary freedom of action.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes 1 Kings 17:1. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Exodus 7:17-20. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. The temporal clause *hotan telesōsin* ('when they have finished') is crucial — the beast cannot touch them until their prophetic task is complete. Their death is not a failure but comes after the fulfillment of their mission. The 'beast from the abyss' (to *thērion* to *anabainon ek tēs abyssou*) is introduced here abruptly and will be fully described in chapter 13. The word *thērion* ('wild beast') is distinct from *zōon* ('living creature') used for the heavenly beings — this is a predatory, destructive entity. The verbs escalate: war (*polemon*), conquer (*nikēsei*), kill (*apoktenei*). The beast's 'conquering' (*nikēsei*) uses the same verb applied to the Lamb in 5:5 and to the faithful in the seven letters — a counterfeit victory that will itself be overcome.
8. The city is identified by three symbolic names: 'the great city' (*tēs poleōs tēs megalēs* — a term later applied to Babylon in 16:19, 17:18, 18:10), 'Sodom' (representing sexual immorality and divine destruction, Genesis 18-19), and 'Egypt' (representing oppression and enslavement of God's people, Exodus 1-14). The clause 'where their Lord was crucified' (*hopou kai ho kyrios autōn estaurōthē*) identifies the city as Jerusalem — yet Jerusalem is described with the names of Israel's archetypal enemies. The adverb *pneumatikōs* ('spiritually, symbolically') signals that these names are prophetic characterizations, not geographical identifiers.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Genesis 18-19 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Exodus 1-14 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
9. The fourfold formula (*laōn, phylōn, glōssōn, ethnōn*) indicates worldwide observation — the witnesses' humiliation is public and universal. The three and a half days (*hēmeras treis kai hēmisy*) mirrors the three and a half years of their ministry in miniature. Refusing burial was the ultimate dishonor in the ancient world (cf. the outrage over the unburied body of Polynices in Sophocles' *Antigone*; and the importance of burial in 1 Kings 14:11; Jeremiah 22:19). The denial of burial expresses contempt for the witnesses and for the God they served.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes 1 Kings 14:11. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Jeremiah 22:19. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
10. The celebration over the prophets' death — complete with gift-giving — is a grim parody of a festival. The witnesses' prophetic ministry is described as 'torment' (*ebasanisan*) from the perspective of the unrepentant — the truth of God's word is experienced as agony by those who reject it. The phrase *hoi katoikountes epi tēs gēs* ('those who dwell on the earth') recurs as Revelation's standard term for humanity in rebellion against God. The scene will be dramatically reversed in the next verses.
11. The phrase *pneuma zōēs ek tou theou* ('breath/spirit of life from God') directly echoes Ezekiel 37:5-10, where God breathes life into the valley of dry bones and they stand on their feet — the same verb *histēmi* ('to stand') appears in both passages. The reversal is total: the celebrated death becomes terrifying resurrection. The divine passive construction (*pneuma...eisēlthen*, 'the breath entered') emphasizes God's direct action. The 'great fear' (*phobos megas*) that falls on observers is the typical human response to divine intervention (cf. Luke 1:12, 65; Acts 5:5, 11).
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Ezekiel 37:5-10. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
12. The command 'Come up here' (*anabate hōde*) echoes the invitation to John in 4:1. The ascension in a cloud (*en tē nephelē*) recalls both Elijah's ascension (2 Kings 2:11) and Christ's ascension (Acts 1:9). The phrase 'their enemies watched' (*etheōrēsan autous hoi echthroī autōn*) is the ultimate reversal — the same people who refused to bury them and celebrated their death now witness their vindication. The cloud, a symbol of divine presence throughout Scripture, carries them into God's domain in full view of their persecutors.

12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on 2 Kings 2:11. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
13. The earthquake accompanies the witnesses' vindication — divine confirmation of their ministry. A tenth (to dekaton) of the city falls, and 7,000 die — precise numbers suggesting a measured, controlled judgment. The 7,000 may invert 1 Kings 19:18, where 7,000 in Israel had not bowed to Baal — there, 7,000 were the faithful remnant; here, 7,000 are the judged. Crucially, 'the rest' (hoi loipoi) gave glory to God (edōkan doxan tō theō tou ouranou) — unlike the survivors of the trumpet plagues who refused to repent (9:20-21), these survivors respond with worship. This suggests that the witnesses' ministry, including their death and resurrection, achieves what the plagues alone could not: genuine repentance.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References 1 Kings 19:18 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
14. This structural marker parallels 9:12. The second woe (the sixth trumpet, including the interlude of chapters 10-11:13) has ended. The third woe is identified with the seventh trumpet, which sounds in the very next verse. The adverb tachy ('quickly, soon') heightens the urgency — there is no further delay.
15. The seventh trumpet is the climactic moment anticipated since 10:7. The SBLGNT reads the singular hē basileia ('the kingdom') rather than the KJV's plural 'kingdoms' — the entire world-system, conceived as a single rebellious kingdom, is now claimed by God and his Christ. The phrase tou kyriou hēmōn kai tou Christou autou ('of our Lord and of his Christ') echoes Psalm 2:2 ('against the LORD and against his anointed one') — the psalm of universal rebellion is answered by universal sovereignty. The future tense basileusei ('he will reign') may be a 'prophetic future' or may indicate that the reign, while declared, is still being realized. The phrase 'forever and ever' (eis tous aiōnas tōn aiōnōn) ensures this is no temporary political transfer but eternal dominion.
15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Psalms 2:2 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
16. The elders respond to the kingdom proclamation as they did to the creation hymn in 4:10-11 — falling prostrate in worship. The pattern of heavenly worship in response to divine action is consistent throughout Revelation. Their thrones (thronous, not the KJV's 'seats') indicate their authority, yet they voluntarily prostrate themselves before the supreme throne.
17. The divine title is now twofold — 'who is and who was' (ho ōn kai ho ēn) — the third element ('who is to come') is omitted because he has now come. The future arrival is no longer anticipated; it has occurred. This subtle change signals the fulfillment of the promise. The verb ebasileusas ('you have reigned/begun to reign') is an ingressive aorist — God has always been sovereign, but now he actively exercises that sovereignty in the transformation of the world's kingdoms. The thanksgiving (eucharistoumen) is the appropriate response when the long-awaited kingdom arrives.
18. The opening line 'the nations raged' (ta ethnē ōrgisthēsan) quotes Psalm 2:1 (LXX), where the nations rage against the LORD and his anointed — a rage now met by God's own wrath (hē orgē sou). The verse compresses the entire eschatological program into a single sentence: judgment of the dead, reward for the faithful (prophets, saints, God-fearers — both small and great, demolishing all social hierarchy), and destruction of the destroyers. The final phrase diaphtheirai tous diaphtheirontas tēn gēn ('to destroy those who destroy the earth') contains a powerful wordplay — the same verb is used for both God's action and the destroyers' crime. Those who corrupt and ruin God's creation will themselves be ruined.
18. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Psalm 2:1 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
19. The heavenly temple opens to reveal the ark of the covenant (hē kibōtos tēs diathēkēs autou) — the most sacred object in Israel's worship, lost since the destruction of Solomon's temple in 586 BC. Its appearance in the heavenly temple declares that what was lost on earth is preserved in heaven — God's covenant faithfulness endures even when its earthly symbols are destroyed. The word diathēkēs ('covenant') connects this vision to the entire biblical narrative of God's binding relationship with his people. The Sinai-theophany formula recurs with full intensity: lightning, rumblings, thunder, earthquake, and now hail — the most complete iteration yet, escalating from 4:5 (lightning, rumblings, thunder) and 8:5 (those plus earthquake). Each repetition adds an element, suggesting that the revelation of God's presence intensifies as Revelation progresses.

# 12

*Summary: Revelation 12 presents a cosmic drama in three movements: a woman clothed with the sun gives birth to a male child who is snatched up to God's throne; war erupts in heaven as Michael and his angels defeat the dragon; and the dragon, cast down to earth, pursues the woman and her offspring. The chapter establishes the theological framework for the rest of the book's conflict — the dragon (identified as Satan) has been defeated in heaven and now wages war against those who keep God's commands and hold to the testimony of Jesus.*

*What Makes This Remarkable: The woman figure is richly symbolic, drawing on imagery from Genesis 37 (Joseph's dream of sun, moon, and twelve stars), Isaiah 26:17-18 and 66:7 (Zion in labor), and the exodus narrative. The male child 'who will rule all nations with an iron rod' echoes Psalm 2:9, a royal messianic psalm. The number 1,260 days (v. 6) equals forty-two months or three and a half years — half of*

*seven, the number of completion — representing a limited period of tribulation. The victory hymn in verses 10-12 is the theological center: the accuser has been thrown down, and the saints conquer him 'by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.'*

**Translation Friction:** *The identity of the woman has been debated throughout Christian history — she has been understood as Israel, the Church, Mary, or a composite figure. We render the Greek as given without resolving this in the text. The 'time, times, and half a time' formula (v. 14) comes from Daniel 7:25 and 12:7, linking Revelation's timeline to Daniel's prophecy.*

**Connections:** *The chapter connects to Genesis 3:15 (enmity between the serpent and the woman's seed), Psalm 2 (the messianic king who rules with an iron rod), Isaiah 66:7-8 (Zion giving birth), Daniel 7:25 and 12:7 (the three-and-a-half-year period), and Daniel 10:13, 21 (Michael as Israel's champion). The dragon's identification as 'the ancient serpent' (v. 9) explicitly links to the Eden narrative.*

<sup>1</sup>Then a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. <sup>2</sup>She was pregnant and was crying out in labor pains, in agony to give birth. <sup>3</sup>Then another sign appeared in heaven: a great fiery-red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. <sup>4</sup>His tail swept a third of the stars from the sky and hurled them to the earth. The dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. <sup>5</sup>She gave birth to a son, a male child, who is destined to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. <sup>6</sup>The woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, so that she would be nourished there for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. <sup>7</sup>Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back, <sup>8</sup>Prevailed not. Neither was their location discovered any more in heaven. <sup>9</sup>The great dragon was thrown down — the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the one who deceives the whole inhabited world — he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. <sup>10</sup>Then I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ, because the accuser of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down — the one who accuses them before our God day and night. <sup>11</sup>They conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives even in the face of death. <sup>12</sup>Therefore rejoice, you heavens and all who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you with great fury, knowing that his time is short." <sup>13</sup>When the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. <sup>14</sup>But the woman was given the two wings of a great eagle so that she could fly to her place in the wilderness, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, away from the presence of the serpent. <sup>15</sup>Then the serpent spewed water like a river from his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with the flood. <sup>16</sup>But the earth helped the woman: the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had spewed from his mouth. <sup>17</sup>Then the dragon became enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring — those who keep God's commands and hold to the testimony of Jesus. <sup>18</sup>I took my stand on the seashore.

#### TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The Greek semeion ('sign') is distinct from the KJV's 'wonder' (teras). A semeion in Revelation is a symbolic vision pointing to a deeper reality, not merely a spectacle. The imagery of sun, moon, and twelve stars echoes Joseph's dream in Genesis 37:9, where these represent Jacob, Rachel, and the twelve tribes of Israel.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Genesis 37:9. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
2. The Greek basanizomene ('being tormented, agonized') is a strong word also used for torture — the birth pangs are depicted with intense suffering. Prophetic birth imagery for Israel's deliverance appears in Isaiah 26:17-18, 66:7-8, and Micah 4:10.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 26:17-18. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Micah 4:10. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.

3. The Greek *pyrros* ('fiery-red') suggests the color of fire or blood, not merely 'red.' The seven heads and ten horns echo the fourth beast of Daniel 7:7, 24, linking the dragon to oppressive imperial power. The diadems (*diademata*) are royal crowns, distinct from the victor's wreath (*stephanos*) worn by the woman in verse 1.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Daniel 7:7 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. The sweeping of a third of the stars recalls Daniel 8:10, where the little horn casts stars to the ground. Stars in apocalyptic literature often represent angelic beings (cf. Revelation 1:20). The dragon's posture before the woman evokes Pharaoh's threat to Israel's children (Exodus 1) and Herod's massacre (Matthew 2).
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Daniel 8:10. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Exodus 1. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
5. The phrase 'shepherd with an iron rod' (*poimainein en rhabdo sidera*) quotes Psalm 2:9 (LXX), where the messianic king rules the nations. The Greek *poimainein* means 'to shepherd, to tend, to rule' — it carries both pastoral care and authoritative governance. The verb *herpassthe* ('was snatched up') is the same root as *harpazo*, used by Paul for the catching up of believers in 1 Thessalonians 4:17.
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Psalms 2:9 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
6. The wilderness (*eremos*) is a place of both danger and divine provision in biblical tradition — Israel was sustained in the wilderness for forty years. The 1,260 days equal forty-two months or three and a half years, a period drawn from Daniel 7:25 and 12:7 that represents a limited time of tribulation under divine control. The passive 'nourished' (*trephōsin*) implies divine provision without naming the agents.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Daniel 7:25. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. Michael (*Michaēl*, from Hebrew 'Who is like God?') appears in Daniel 10:13, 21 and 12:1 as the angelic prince who fights for Israel. The war in heaven is presented not as a primordial event but as a consequence of the messianic birth and ascension described in verse 5.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Daniel 10:13. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. The Greek *ouk ischysen* ('he was not strong enough') emphasizes the dragon's inability, not merely his defeat. The phrase 'no place found' (*oude topos heurethe*) echoes Daniel 2:35, where the kingdoms of the world leave no trace. The expulsion is total and permanent.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Daniel 2:35 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
9. This verse provides four identifying titles: 'the great dragon' (the current visionary form), 'the ancient serpent' (linking to Genesis 3), 'the Devil' (*diabolos*, 'slanderer, accuser'), and 'Satan' (*Satanas*, from Hebrew *satan*, 'adversary'). The participle *planōn* ('the one deceiving') describes his ongoing activity. The Greek *oikoumenē* ('the inhabited world') refers to the entire human world, not merely the Roman Empire.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Genesis 3. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
10. The Greek *katēgōr* ('accuser') is a legal term for a prosecutor. The image draws on Zechariah 3:1, where Satan stands to accuse the high priest Joshua. The fourfold declaration — salvation, power, kingdom, authority — marks the dragon's expulsion as the turning point of cosmic history. The phrase 'day and night' indicates relentless, ceaseless accusation.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Zechariah 3:1 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
11. The verb *enikēsan* ('they conquered, they overcame') is the same word used of Christ in 5:5 — the believers' victory mirrors and participates in the Lamb's victory. The three instruments of victory — blood, testimony, and self-sacrifice — form a pattern central to Revelation's theology: conquering through faithful witness, not through violence. The phrase 'did not love their lives even in the face of death' (*ouk ēgapēsan tēn psychēn autōn achri thanatou*) does not celebrate death but commends a loyalty that death cannot break.
12. The Greek *skēnountes* ('those who tent, those who dwell') uses the same root as *skēnē* ('tabernacle'), evoking God's dwelling presence. The contrast is sharp: heaven rejoices because the accuser is gone, but earth and sea face intensified danger because a cornered, desperate enemy is more dangerous, not less. The word *thymos* ('fury, rage') is distinct from *orgē* ('wrath') — *thymos* suggests explosive, passionate anger.
13. The Greek *ediōxen* ('pursued, persecuted') carries both senses — physical pursuit and hostile persecution. The narrative resumes from verse 6, now explaining why the woman fled to the wilderness.
14. Eagle wings as divine deliverance echo Exodus 19:4 ('I carried you on eagles' wings') and Deuteronomy 32:11. The time formula 'a time, times, and half a time' (*kairon kai kairous kai hemisy kairou*) comes directly from Daniel 7:25 and 12:7, equaling three and a half years or 1,260 days (v. 6). This deliberate echo ties Revelation's persecution timeline to Daniel's prophetic framework.
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Exodus 19:4. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.

14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Deuteronomy 32:11. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Daniel 7:25. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
15. The flood-from-the-mouth imagery may draw on ancient Near Eastern chaos-water mythology and the biblical tradition of threatening waters (Psalm 18:4, 69:1-2, 124:4-5). The Greek potamophoretōn ('carried away by a river') is a rare compound word found only here in the New Testament.
15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Psalm 18:4 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
16. The earth personified as an agent of rescue reverses the 'woe to the earth' of verse 12. Creation itself assists in God's protective purposes. The imagery of the earth swallowing may echo Numbers 16:32, where the earth swallowed Korah's rebellion — but here the earth swallows the threat rather than the threatened.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Numbers 16:32. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
17. The phrase 'the rest of her offspring' (tōn loipōn tou spermatos autēs) echoes Genesis 3:15, where enmity is placed between the serpent and the woman's seed. The two identifying marks of the woman's offspring — keeping God's commands and holding the testimony of Jesus — define the faithful community throughout Revelation (cf. 14:12). The SBLGNT omits 'Christ' after 'Jesus' in the best manuscripts.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Genesis 3:15. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
18. Textual variant: some manuscripts read 'I stood' (estathēn, first person — the KJV reading), but the SBLGNT reads 'he stood' (estathē, third person), referring to the dragon. We follow the SBLGNT. The dragon's position on the seashore anticipates the beast rising from the sea in 13:1. This verse functions as a transition between chapters 12 and 13.

# 13

**Summary:** *Revelation 13 introduces the dragon's two agents on earth: a beast rising from the sea with ten horns and seven heads, and a second beast rising from the earth with two horns like a lamb. The first beast receives the dragon's authority and wages war against the saints. The second beast performs signs and compels all people to worship the first beast, enforcing a mark without which no one can buy or sell. The chapter closes with the famous number of the beast: 666.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The sea beast combines features of all four beasts from Daniel 7 — leopard, bear, lion, and ten-horned monster — into a single composite figure, suggesting it embodies all oppressive empire. The fatal wound that was healed (v. 3) parodies Christ's death and resurrection. The second beast acts as a false prophet (later explicitly called this in 16:13, 19:20), forming a counterfeit trinity: the dragon (anti-Father), the sea beast (anti-Christ), and the earth beast (anti-Spirit). The number 666, calculated through gematria (assigning numerical values to letters), most likely points to 'Nero Caesar' in Hebrew letters, though the text deliberately leaves the identification as a riddle.*

**Translation Friction:** *The identity of the beast has generated centuries of speculation. We render the Greek text without identifying the beast with any specific historical or future figure. The 'mark' (charagma) was a term used for imperial stamps and brands in the Roman world, but the text presents it in visionary, symbolic terms that transcend any single historical referent.*

**Connections:** *The chapter draws heavily on Daniel 7 (the four beasts and the saints' persecution), Daniel 3 (the command to worship an image on pain of death), and Exodus 7-8 (signs performed by competing powers). The mark on the forehead and hand inverts the phylacteries of Deuteronomy 6:8 and the seal of God on the forehead in Revelation 7:3.*

<sup>1</sup>And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads. On its horns were ten diadems, and on its heads were blasphemous names. <sup>2</sup>The beast I saw resembled a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. The dragon gave it his power and his throne and great authority. <sup>3</sup>One of its heads appeared to have been fatally wounded, but its mortal wound had been healed. The whole earth was amazed and followed the beast. <sup>4</sup>They worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?" <sup>5</sup>The beast was given a mouth to speak arrogant words and blasphemies, and it was given authority to

act for forty-two months. <sup>6</sup>It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling — that is, those who dwell in heaven. <sup>7</sup>It was permitted to wage war against the saints and to conquer them, and it was given authority over every tribe and people and language and nation. <sup>8</sup>All who dwell on the earth will worship it — everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. <sup>9</sup>If anyone has an ear, let them hear: <sup>10</sup>If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity they go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword they will be killed. Here is the endurance and the faith of the saints. <sup>11</sup>Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. <sup>12</sup>It exercises all the authority of the first beast on its behalf and makes the earth and those who dwell on it worship the first beast, whose mortal wound had been healed. <sup>13</sup>It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of people. <sup>14</sup>It deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs it was permitted to perform on behalf of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image for the beast that had been wounded by the sword and yet lived. <sup>15</sup>It was permitted to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast could even speak and cause all who would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. <sup>16</sup>It also compels everyone — small and great, rich and poor, free and slave — to receive a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, <sup>17</sup>That no person may buy or sell, rescue he that had the mark, or the identity of the beast, or the number of his identity. <sup>18</sup>This calls for wisdom. Let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a person, and its number is six hundred sixty-six.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The SBLGNT places 'and he stood on the sand of the sea' at the end of chapter 12 (12:18), so chapter 13 begins with 'And I saw.' The beast from the sea echoes Daniel 7:3, where four beasts rise from the sea — here compressed into one composite monster. The sea in apocalyptic thought represents chaos and the realm of evil. The diadems are on the horns (political power) rather than the heads, distinguishing this from the dragon's diadems in 12:3. The plural 'blasphemous names' (onomata blasphemias) suggests imperial titles claiming divine status.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Daniel 7:3. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
2. The three animal features come from Daniel 7:4-6 but in reverse order — leopard (Daniel's third beast), bear (second), lion (first) — suggesting John sees them from the perspective of the present looking backward. The transfer of power, throne, and authority from dragon to beast establishes the beast as Satan's earthly agent, a dark parody of the Father giving authority to the Son (Matthew 28:18).
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Daniel 7:4-6. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
3. The Greek *hōs esphagmenēn* ('as though slain') uses the same verb (*sphazō*) applied to the Lamb in 5:6 — the beast parodies Christ's death and resurrection. The 'healing' of the death-wound creates a counterfeit resurrection narrative that captures the world's allegiance. The verb *ethaumasthē* ('was amazed, marveled') indicates awe that leads to worship.
4. The acclamation 'Who is like the beast?' is a blasphemous inversion of the divine praise 'Who is like you, LORD?' (Exodus 15:11, Psalm 35:10) and even of Michael's name (Mi-ka-el, 'Who is like God?'). The dual worship — of dragon and beast — reveals that the beast's power is derivative; worshiping the beast means worshiping the dragon behind it.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Exodus 15:11. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Psalm 35:10. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
5. The passive 'was given' (*edothē*) appears twice, indicating that the beast's power operates under divine permission — even the beast's authority has boundaries set by God. The 'mouth speaking great things' echoes Daniel 7:8, 11, 20 (the little horn). The forty-two months equal 1,260 days or three and a half years, the same period of the woman's wilderness refuge in 12:6, 14.
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Daniel 7:8 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
6. The beast's blasphemy targets three things: God's name, God's dwelling (*skēnē*, 'tabernacle/tent'), and those who dwell in heaven. The apposition 'his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven' suggests that God's true tabernacle is his people — the dwelling and the dwellers are identified. The Greek *skēnē* recalls the tabernacle tradition and anticipates 21:3, where God's dwelling will be with humanity.
7. Again the divine passive 'was given' (*edothē*) — the beast's war against the saints occurs within God's sovereign permission, echoing Daniel 7:21 where the horn prevails against the saints for a time. The fourfold universal formula (tribe, people, language, nation) appears repeatedly in Revelation (5:9, 7:9, 11:9, 14:6) and here describes the beast's totalitarian reach.

7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Daniel 7:21. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. The phrase 'from the foundation of the world' (apo katabolēs kosmou) can modify either 'written' (names written before creation) or 'slain' (the Lamb slain before creation). The Greek word order most naturally connects it to 'written' — the names were recorded before the world's foundation. Compare 17:8, where the same phrase clearly modifies 'written.' Both readings carry profound theological weight.
9. This formula echoes Jesus's repeated refrain in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 11:15, 13:9) and in Revelation's letters to the seven churches (2:7, 11, etc.). Here it introduces the solemn oracle that follows, demanding careful attention from the hearer.
10. This oracle, echoing Jeremiah 15:2 and 43:11, calls the saints to accept suffering rather than retaliate. The Greek hypomonē ('endurance, patient steadfastness') is one of Revelation's key ethical terms — it describes not passive resignation but active, faithful perseverance under pressure. The SBLGNT reading presents both lines as statements about the saints' destiny, not as threats against persecutors.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Jeremiah 15:2 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
11. The second beast rises from the earth (gē) rather than the sea, perhaps representing established social and religious structures rather than chaotic political power. Its lamb-like appearance but dragon-like speech makes it a deceiver — it looks harmless but serves the dragon's purposes. Later (16:13, 19:20, 20:10) this beast is called 'the false prophet,' clarifying its role as a religious counterfeit.
12. The second beast functions as enforcer and propagandist for the first. The phrase 'on its behalf' (enōpion autou, literally 'before him/in his presence') indicates the second beast acts as the first beast's representative. This mirrors the Holy Spirit's role in directing worship to Christ — the second beast directs worship to the first beast, completing the counterfeit trinity.
13. Fire from heaven recalls Elijah's contest on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:38) — the second beast counterfeits prophetic signs. Jesus warned that false prophets would perform signs to deceive (Matthew 24:24), and Paul speaks of the lawless one performing counterfeit miracles (2 Thessalonians 2:9). The signs are real in their effects but deceptive in their source and purpose.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References 1 Kings 18:38 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
14. The command to construct an image (eikōn) of the beast recalls Nebuchadnezzar's golden image in Daniel 3, where refusal to worship meant death. The beast's recovery from a sword wound (plēgē tēs machairēs) continues the parody of Christ's death and resurrection. The verb ezēsen ('lived, came to life') is the same word used for Christ's resurrection in 2:8.
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Daniel 3. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
15. The Greek pneuma here means 'breath' rather than 'spirit' or 'life' — the second beast animates the image with breath, parodying God breathing life into Adam (Genesis 2:7). The speaking image may reflect ancient practices of ventriloquism in pagan temples or mechanical devices that made idols appear to speak. The death penalty for non-worship directly parallels Daniel 3:6.
15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Genesis 2:7 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Daniel 3:6 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
16. The Greek charagma ('mark, stamp, brand') was used for the imperial stamp on documents and the brand on livestock or slaves. The three pairs (small/great, rich/poor, free/slave) emphasize that no social category is exempt. The mark on hand and forehead deliberately inverts the Shema practice of Deuteronomy 6:8, where God's words are bound on hand and forehead — the beast demands the same total allegiance that belongs to God alone.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Deuteronomy 6:8. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
17. Economic exclusion as a tool of coercion would have resonated powerfully in the Roman trade-guild system, where participation in commercial life often required offering incense to the emperor or patron deity. The mark, the name, and the number appear to be three expressions of the same allegiance, not three separate requirements.
18. The Greek arithmos anthrōpou ('number of a person/human') could mean either 'a number that identifies a specific person' or 'a human number' (as opposed to an angelic one). The number 666, through Hebrew gematria (where letters carry numerical values), most plausibly corresponds to 'Nero Caesar' (nrwn qsr = 50+200+6+50+100+60+200 = 666). Some manuscripts read 616, which corresponds to 'Nero Caesar' in the Latin spelling. The text presents the calculation as a riddle requiring wisdom, not as an equation with an obvious solution.

## 14

**Summary:** *Revelation 14 presents a series of contrasting visions. First, the Lamb stands on Mount Zion with 144,000 redeemed saints singing a new song. Then three angels proclaim messages in sequence: the eternal gospel, the fall of Babylon, and a warning against taking the beast's mark. A voice from heaven pronounces blessing on those who die in the Lord. Finally, two harvest visions close the chapter — one of grain reaped by the Son of Man, and one of grapes thrown into 'the great winepress of God's wrath,' producing blood as deep as a horse's bridle.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The chapter functions as an intermission between the beast visions (ch. 13) and the bowl judgments (chs. 15-16), providing heavenly perspective on earthly events. The 144,000 reappear from chapter 7, now seen in their triumphant state. The three angel messages (vv. 6-11) form a triptych of proclamation that has been extraordinarily influential in Christian history. The harvest imagery draws on Joel 3:13 and Isaiah 63:1-6, with the winepress producing blood to the depth of about 180 miles — a hyperbolically horrifying image of judgment.*

**Translation Friction:** *The 144,000 who 'have not defiled themselves with women' (v. 4) has been interpreted as literal celibacy, spiritual purity (faithfulness to God), or metaphorical virginity (not participating in idolatrous worship). We render the Greek directly and note the interpretive options. The grain harvest (vv. 14-16) and grape harvest (vv. 17-20) may represent different aspects of judgment, or grain may symbolize salvation and grapes judgment.*

**Connections:** *Mount Zion connects to Psalm 2:6 and Isaiah 24:23. The new song recalls Psalms 33:3, 96:1, and 149:1. The harvest imagery draws on Joel 3:13, Isaiah 63:1-6, and Jesus's harvest parables (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43). The winepress of God's wrath anticipates 19:15. The declaration 'Fallen is Babylon' echoes Isaiah 21:9 and anticipates chapters 17-18.*

<sup>1</sup>Then I looked, and there was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him were one hundred forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. <sup>2</sup>I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the sound I heard was like harpists playing their harps. <sup>3</sup>They were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders, and no one could learn the song except the one hundred forty-four thousand who had been redeemed from the earth. <sup>4</sup>These are the ones who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were redeemed from among humanity as firstfruits for God and for the Lamb. <sup>5</sup>No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless. <sup>6</sup>Then I saw another angel flying in midheaven, carrying an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on the earth — to every nation and tribe and language and people. <sup>7</sup>He said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship the one who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water." <sup>8</sup>A second angel followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great — she who made all the nations drink the wine of the fury of her sexual immorality." <sup>9</sup>A third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on their forehead or on their hand, <sup>10</sup>Indeed, the same will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation. Then he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: <sup>11</sup>The smoke of their torment rises forever and ever, and they have no rest day or night — those who worship the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name." <sup>12</sup>Here is the endurance of the saints — those who keep God's commands and their faith in Jesus. <sup>13</sup>Then I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them." <sup>14</sup>Then I looked, and there was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. <sup>15</sup>Another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to the one seated on the cloud, "Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is fully ripe." <sup>16</sup>So the one seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested. <sup>17</sup>Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. <sup>18</sup>Still another angel came from the altar —

the one who has authority over fire — and he called with a loud voice to the angel with the sharp sickle, "Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe." <sup>19</sup>So the angel swung his sickle over the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of God's wrath. <sup>20</sup>The winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress as high as a horse's bridle for a distance of one thousand six hundred stadia.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The SBLGNT includes both the Lamb's name and the Father's name on the foreheads, in contrast to the KJV which mentions only the Father's name. This double name stands in direct contrast to the beast's mark on the foreheads of its followers (13:16). Mount Zion represents God's chosen dwelling place (Psalm 2:6, 48:2), and the Lamb's standing there asserts sovereign authority over the territory the beast claims.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Psalm 2:6. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
2. Three similes describe the heavenly sound: rushing waters (cf. Ezekiel 1:24, 43:2), thunder (associated with divine presence), and harp music (associated with worship). The combination of overwhelming power and musical beauty reflects the dual nature of the heavenly reality — both awesome and beautiful.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Ezekiel 1:24. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
3. The 'new song' (ōdē kainē) is a recurring biblical motif (Psalm 33:3, 40:3, 96:1, 144:9, 149:1) signaling a new act of God's deliverance. The Greek ēgorasmenoi ('redeemed, purchased') uses commercial language — these were 'bought' from the earth, the purchase price being the Lamb's blood (cf. 5:9). Only those who have experienced this redemption can sing this song — the content is inseparable from the experience.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Psalm 33:3 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. The Greek parthenoi ('virgins') applied to males is unusual. Three main interpretations exist: (1) literal celibacy as a form of military consecration (cf. Deuteronomy 23:9-10, 1 Samuel 21:4-5); (2) metaphorical sexual purity representing spiritual faithfulness — not participating in the 'fornication' of idolatrous Babylon (cf. 17:2, 18:3); (3) a broader metaphor for covenant faithfulness, since the Old Testament often portrays idolatry as sexual unfaithfulness. The term 'firstfruits' (aparchē) comes from Israel's agricultural offering system (Leviticus 23:10) — the first portion, dedicated to God, that consecrates the whole harvest.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Deuteronomy 23:9-10. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes 1 Samuel 21:4-5. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Leviticus 23:10. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
5. The Greek pseudos ('lie, falsehood') connects to the dragon's identity as deceiver (12:9) and to the exclusion of liars from the New Jerusalem (21:27, 22:15). The word amōmoi ('blameless, without blemish') is sacrificial language — it describes unblemished animals fit for offering (cf. Leviticus 1:3, 1 Peter 1:19). The SBLGNT omits 'before the throne of God' found in some manuscripts and the KJV.
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Leviticus 1:3 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
6. The Greek euangelion aiōnion ('eternal gospel/good news') is striking — even at the hour of judgment, the message remains 'good news.' The angel flies in mesouranēma ('midheaven,' the zenith of the sky), ensuring maximum visibility and audibility. The fourfold universal formula (nation, tribe, language, people) appears in a different order from 13:7, perhaps emphasizing universality through variation.
7. The angel's proclamation is essentially a call to creation-worship — worship the Creator, not the creature. The fourfold creation catalogue (heaven, earth, sea, springs) echoes Exodus 20:11 and Psalm 146:6. In the context of beast-worship (ch. 13), this is a radical counter-claim: the only one worthy of worship is the Maker of all things. The 'hour of judgment' (hōra tēs kriseōs) recalls Jesus's language in John 12:31.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Exodus 20:11. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Psalm 146:6. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. The doubled 'fallen, fallen' (epesen epesen) quotes Isaiah 21:9, where it announces historical Babylon's fall. The metaphor is layered: Babylon's 'wine' represents both the intoxicating allure of her idolatry and empire, and the wrath (thymos) that results from drinking it. The Greek porneia ('sexual immorality, fornication') is used throughout Revelation as a metaphor for idolatrous allegiance — spiritual unfaithfulness to God. This brief announcement anticipates the extended Babylon oracle in chapters 17-18.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 21:9 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.

9. The third angel's message is the most severe warning in Revelation, extending through verse 11. The three conditions — worshipping the beast, worshipping its image, receiving its mark — are parallel expressions of the same allegiance. This directly answers the economic coercion of 13:16-17 by declaring the eternal consequences of compliance.
10. The Greek *akratou* ('unmixed, full strength') refers to wine not diluted with water — in the ancient world, wine was normally mixed. Unmixed wine meant maximum intensity. The combination of *thymos* ('fury, passion') and *orgē* ('wrath, settled anger') in the same phrase is unique and emphatic. Fire and sulfur (*theion*, 'brimstone/sulfur') recall the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24). The judgment occurs 'in the presence of (*enōpion*) the Lamb — the one who offered mercy that was refused now witnesses the consequences of refusal.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Genesis 19:24 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
11. The phrase *eis aiōnas aiōnōn* ('to the ages of ages, forever and ever') is the strongest expression of unending duration in Greek. The image of smoke ascending echoes Isaiah 34:10 (the destruction of Edom). The 'no rest day or night' contrasts sharply with the four living creatures who worship God 'day and night' (4:8) — perpetual torment mirrors perpetual worship in tragic inversion.
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 34:10. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
12. This echoes the same double identification from 12:17: keeping God's commands and holding faith in Jesus. The Greek *pistin Iēsou* could be 'faith in Jesus' (objective genitive) or 'the faithfulness of Jesus' (subjective genitive). Both readings are theologically valid — the saints endure because they trust Jesus and because they share in his pattern of faithfulness.
13. This is the second of seven beatitudes in Revelation (1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, 22:14). The phrase 'from now on' (*ap' arti*) may mean 'from this point in the visionary narrative' or 'from this eschatological moment.' The Spirit confirms and expands the heavenly voice — a rare dialogue between heaven and the Spirit. The 'rest' (*anapausontai*) directly contrasts with the 'no rest' of beast-worshippers in verse 11. Their 'deeds follow them' — good works are not left behind at death but accompany the faithful into God's presence.
14. The phrase 'one like a son of man' (*homoion huion anthrōpou*) comes from Daniel 7:13, where a human-like figure receives dominion from the Ancient of Days. This same phrase opens Revelation in 1:13. The golden crown (*stephanos*) is a victor's wreath, not a royal diadem. The sickle (*drepanon*) introduces the harvest metaphor that will dominate the rest of the chapter, drawing on Joel 3:13.
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Daniel 7:13. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Joel 3:13. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
15. The angel comes from the temple (*naos*), indicating the command originates with God. The Greek *exēranthē* ('is dried, is fully ripe') literally means 'has dried out' — grain is harvested when it dries on the stalk. Whether this grain harvest represents salvation (gathering the elect) or judgment (or both) is debated. The distinction between the grain harvest (vv. 14-16) and grape harvest (vv. 17-20) may parallel Jesus's parable of wheat and tares (Matthew 13:24-30).
16. The brevity of this verse is striking — no details are given about the harvest's outcome or destination. The passive 'was harvested' (*etheristhē*) leaves the result unstated, creating a deliberate pause before the far more graphic grape harvest that follows.
17. This angel carries a sickle like the Son of Man figure, but the harvest he will perform is explicitly one of wrath. The specification 'the temple in heaven' (*tou naou tou en tō ouranō*) emphasizes the heavenly origin of this judgment.
18. The angel from the altar connects to 6:9-10, where the souls under the altar cry for justice, and to 8:3-5, where fire from the altar is hurled to earth. The altar-angel's authority over fire links judgment to the prayers of the martyrs. The verb *ēkmasan* ('are ripe') literally means 'have reached their peak' — the grapes are at maximum ripeness, meaning the wickedness of the earth has reached its full measure.
19. The winepress (*lēnos*) as a metaphor for divine judgment comes from Isaiah 63:1-6, where God treads the winepress alone and the nations' lifeblood spatters his garments. The phrase 'the great winepress of God's wrath' (*tēn lēnon tou thymou tou theou ton megan*) uses *thymos* ('fury, passionate wrath'), emphasizing the intensity of divine judgment. This image returns in 19:15.
19. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 63:1-6. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
20. The location 'outside the city' may echo the tradition that Jesus suffered 'outside the gate' (Hebrews 13:12) or the Joel 3 judgment in the Valley of Jehoshaphat outside Jerusalem. The scale is deliberately apocalyptic and hyperbolic: blood reaching horse-bridle depth (about four and a half feet) for 1,600 stadia (approximately 184 miles, or roughly the length of Palestine). The number 1,600 may be symbolic: 4 x 4 x 100, representing the four corners of the earth squared and multiplied — totality of judgment. A stadion is approximately 607 feet (185 meters).
20. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Joel 3 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.

## 15

**Summary:** *Revelation 15 is the shortest chapter in the book and serves as the prelude to the seven bowl judgments. John sees those who have conquered the beast standing on a sea of glass mixed with fire, singing the Song of Moses and of the Lamb. Then the heavenly temple opens and seven angels emerge with seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, while smoke from God's glory fills the temple so that no one can enter.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The Song of Moses and of the Lamb (vv. 3-4) merges exodus and new covenant in a single hymn. It draws almost entirely from Old Testament scripture — every line echoes Exodus 15, Deuteronomy 32, Psalm 86, Psalm 111, Jeremiah 10, and Malachi 1. The sea of glass mixed with fire recalls the Red Sea crossing, where Israel stood on the far shore and sang (Exodus 15:1-21). The smoke filling the temple so that no one can enter parallels the dedication of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 8:10-11) and the Sinai theophany (Exodus 19:18) — God's glory is so intense that even the heavenly temple becomes inaccessible.*

**Translation Friction:** *The 'Song of Moses and of the Lamb' combines two great deliverances — from Egypt and from sin — in a single composition. Whether 'of Moses and of the Lamb' means one combined song or two songs is debated; the singular 'song' (ōdēn) in Greek favors a single unified hymn.*

**Connections:** *The chapter connects to Exodus 15 (the Song of the Sea), 1 Kings 8:10-11 (glory filling the temple), Isaiah 6:4 (smoke in the temple), and Leviticus 26:21 (plagues multiplied sevenfold). The phrase 'King of the nations' echoes Jeremiah 10:7. The seven bowls parallel the seven trumpets (chs. 8-11) but with intensified scope.*

<sup>1</sup>Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels with seven plagues — the last ones — because with them the wrath of God is completed. <sup>2</sup>I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name were standing beside the sea of glass, holding harps of God. <sup>3</sup>They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are your works, Lord God Almighty! Righteous and true are your ways, King of the nations! <sup>4</sup>Who will not fear you, Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, because your righteous acts have been revealed." <sup>5</sup>After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent of testimony in heaven was opened, <sup>6</sup>The seven angels arrived out of the temple, after the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and after their breasts girded with golden girdles. <sup>7</sup>Then one of the four living creatures gave the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever. <sup>8</sup>The sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. This is the third 'sign' (semeion) in heaven, following the woman (12:1) and the dragon (12:3). The word *eschatas* ('last') indicates these bowl plagues bring God's judgments to their final expression. The verb *etelesthē* ('is completed, is finished') from *teleō* shares the root of Jesus's cry *tetelestai* ('It is finished,' John 19:30) — God's wrath, like his salvation, reaches its *telos* (goal/end).
2. The sea of glass first appeared in 4:6 before God's throne. Here it is mixed with fire — possibly reflecting the trials through which the victors have passed, or the judgment about to be poured out. The Greek *epi tēn thalassan* ('on/beside the sea') recalls Israel standing on the far shore of the Red Sea. The conquerors are defined by three victories: over the beast, its image, and its number. The 'harps of God' (*kitharas tou theou*) are instruments belonging to God, given for worship.
3. Moses is called 'servant of God' (*doulou tou theou*), the same title given him in Joshua 1:1 (LXX). The SBLGNT reads 'King of the nations' (*basileus tōn ethnōn*), following Jeremiah 10:7, rather than the KJV's 'King of saints' (a variant reading). The hymn's content draws entirely from Old Testament praise: 'great and marvelous works' from Psalm 111:2, 'righteous and true ways' from Deuteronomy 32:4, and 'King of the nations' from Jeremiah 10:7.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Exodus 15:1-18 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Joshua 1:1 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.

3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Jeremiah 10:7 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Psalm 111:2 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Deuteronomy 32:4 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. The rhetorical question 'Who will not fear?' echoes Jeremiah 10:7. The declaration 'you alone are holy' (monos hosios) uses hosios rather than hagios — hosios emphasizes moral purity and faithfulness to covenant obligations, while hagios emphasizes separation and consecration. The prophecy that 'all nations will come and worship' draws on Psalm 86:9 and anticipates the universal worship described in the New Jerusalem (21:24-26). The word dikaiōmata ('righteous acts, just decrees') can refer to both God's judgments and his saving acts.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Psalms 86:9. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Jeremiah 10:7. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
5. The unusual phrase 'sanctuary of the tent of testimony' (naos tēs skēnēs tou martyriou) combines temple and tabernacle language, echoing the wilderness tabernacle of Numbers 17:7 (LXX) — the 'tent of testimony' where God's covenant law was kept. The opening of this heavenly sanctuary signals that what follows comes directly from God's covenant faithfulness and justice.
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Numbers 17:7 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
6. The angels' attire — clean linen (linon katharon lampron) and golden sashes — matches the description of Christ in 1:13 and of the heavenly armies in 19:14. Some manuscripts read lithon ('stone') instead of linon ('linen'), which would suggest gemstone-like brilliance, but the SBLGNT follows the linen reading. The priestly vestments indicate that the bowl judgments are a liturgical act — God's justice administered as sacred duty.
7. The Greek phialē ('bowl') is a broad, shallow bowl used for libations in temple worship — the KJV's 'vials' is misleading. The bowls are golden, matching the heavenly furnishings (5:8, golden bowls of incense). That a living creature distributes them connects the judgments to the worship of the throne room. The title 'God who lives forever and ever' (tou theou tou zōntos eis tous aiōnas tōn aiōnōn) contrasts sharply with the beast whose life is derivative and temporary.
8. The smoke (kapnos) from God's glory recalls Isaiah 6:4, where the temple fills with smoke during Isaiah's throne vision. The inability to enter the temple means that intercession is suspended — the time for mercy has passed and judgment must run its full course. The verb telesthōsin ('are completed') echoes verse 1's etelesthē — the plagues must reach their telos (completion/goal).
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 6:4 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.

## 16

**Summary:** *Revelation 16 narrates the pouring out of the seven bowls of God's wrath in rapid succession. The plagues strike the earth (sores), the sea (blood), the rivers (blood), the sun (scorching heat), the beast's throne (darkness), the Euphrates (dried up, preparing for kings from the east), and finally the air (earthquake and hail). Two interludes punctuate the sequence: an affirmation of God's justice (vv. 5-7) and the gathering of kings at Armageddon (vv. 13-16). The chapter climaxes with 'It is done!' and catastrophic judgment on Babylon.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The seven bowls intensify the Egyptian plague pattern established in the trumpet sequence (chs. 8-9), but whereas the trumpets affected one-third of creation, the bowls are total. The bowl plagues correspond to the Exodus plagues: sores (sixth plague, Exodus 9:10), water to blood (first plague, Exodus 7:20), darkness (ninth plague, Exodus 10:22), frogs (second plague, Exodus 8:2), and hail (seventh plague, Exodus 9:23). The reference to Armageddon (Har-Magedon, v. 16) — the only occurrence of this word in the Bible — has become one of the most culturally influential terms in Revelation.*

**Translation Friction:** *The name 'Armageddon' (Harmagedon in Greek) is debated: it likely transliterates the Hebrew Har Megiddo ('Mountain of Megiddo'), though Megiddo is a plain, not a mountain. Some scholars connect it to Har Mo'ed ('Mountain of Assembly,' Isaiah 14:13) or other Hebrew constructions. We transliterate the Greek as given.*

*Connections: The bowl sequence parallels the Exodus plagues and the trumpet judgments (chs. 8-11). The drying of the Euphrates (v. 12) recalls the parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 14) and the Jordan (Joshua 3). The three unclean spirits like frogs echo the Egyptian frog plague. Armageddon connects to the Megiddo battlefield tradition (Judges 5:19, 2 Kings 23:29). 'It is done!' (v. 17) parallels 'It is finished' (John 19:30).*

<sup>1</sup>Then I heard a loud voice from the sanctuary saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth." <sup>2</sup>So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores broke out on the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. <sup>3</sup>The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became like the blood of a dead person, and every living creature in the sea died. <sup>4</sup>The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. <sup>5</sup>Then I heard the angel of the waters say, "You are righteous, the one who is and who was, the Holy One, because you have judged these things. <sup>6</sup>Because they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, you have given them blood to drink. They deserve it." <sup>7</sup>And I heard the altar say, "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are your judgments." <sup>8</sup>The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire. <sup>9</sup>People were scorched by the intense heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has authority over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory. <sup>10</sup>The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish <sup>11</sup>Blasphemed the God of the heavens above on account of the fact that of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds. <sup>12</sup>The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the east. <sup>13</sup>And out of the mouth of the false prophet, I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast. <sup>14</sup>These are demonic spirits performing signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole inhabited world to gather them for the battle on the great day of God the Almighty. <sup>15</sup>"Look, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps their clothes on, so that they will not walk around naked and their shame be exposed." <sup>16</sup>And they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon. <sup>17</sup>The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came from the sanctuary, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" <sup>18</sup>There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a violent earthquake — such as had not occurred since people first appeared on the earth — so great was the earthquake. <sup>19</sup>The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. God remembered Babylon the great and gave her the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath. <sup>20</sup>Every island fled, and the mountains could no longer be found. <sup>21</sup>Enormous hailstones, each weighing about a talent, fell from the sky on people, and they blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, for the plague was extremely severe.

#### TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. Since no one could enter the sanctuary (15:8), the voice must be God's own. The verb *ekcheete* ('pour out') is the standard term for pouring libations — the bowls of wrath are poured out as a liturgical act, an ironic inversion of the drink offering. The command is comprehensive: all seven bowls are to be poured in sequence.
2. The Greek *helkos kakon kai ponēron* ('harmful and painful sore') echoes the sixth Egyptian plague (Exodus 9:10-11, LXX). Notably, the plague targets only those with the beast's mark — there is discrimination in this judgment. The two adjectives (*kakon*, 'bad/harmful,' and *ponēron*, 'painful/evil') emphasize the severity.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Exodus 9:10-11. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
3. The sea turning to blood echoes the first Egyptian plague (Exodus 7:20-21) and the second trumpet (8:8-9), but is more intense — the second trumpet killed a third of sea life; here everything dies. The specification 'blood of a dead person' (*haima hōs nekrou*) indicates coagulated, putrid blood — not flowing life-blood but death-blood. The phrase 'every living soul' (*pasa psychē zōēs*) is total.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Exodus 7:20-21 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. The third bowl extends the blood-water plague from the sea to freshwater sources — rivers and springs. This parallels the third trumpet (8:10-11) but goes further: the trumpet made water bitter; the bowl turns it to blood entirely. The brevity of 'and they became blood' (*kai egeneto haima*) emphasizes the immediate totality of the transformation.

5. The 'angel of the waters' (angelos tōn hydatōn) suggests angelic jurisdiction over natural elements (cf. 7:1, angels of the winds; 14:18, angel of fire). The divine title 'the one who is and who was' (ho ōn kai ho ēn) notably omits the usual third element 'and who is to come' (cf. 1:4, 8; 4:8) — perhaps because God has now arrived in judgment. The word hosios ('Holy One') emphasizes God's moral integrity and covenant faithfulness.
6. The principle of retributive justice is explicit: those who shed blood are given blood to drink. The verb exechesan ('they poured out') uses the same root as the pouring of the bowls (ekcheō) — a grim wordplay. The final phrase axioi eisin ('they are worthy/deserving') uses the same adjective applied to God and the Lamb in worship (4:11, 5:9, 12) — a dark inversion where 'worthiness' means deserving of judgment.
7. The altar itself speaks — personified as the voice of the martyrs whose souls rest beneath it (6:9-10). Their prayer for justice ('How long, Lord?') receives this answer. The SBLGNT reads 'the altar' (tou thusiastēriou) without 'another,' suggesting the altar itself speaks rather than an angel from it. The affirmation 'true and righteous' (alēthinai kai dikaiai) echoes 15:3 and confirms that God's judgments are both factually accurate and morally just.
8. The fourth trumpet darkened a third of the sun (8:12); the fourth bowl intensifies the sun instead. The divine passive edothē ('it was given/allowed') maintains the theme that even destructive forces operate under God's permission. The verb kaumatisai ('to burn, to scorch') appears in the New Testament only here and in verse 9.
9. The refusal to repent despite suffering is a recurring theme in the bowl sequence (vv. 9, 11, 21), echoing Pharaoh's hardened heart during the Exodus plagues. The people correctly identify God as the source of the plagues but respond with blasphemy rather than repentance. The phrase 'give him glory' (dounai autō doxan) is precisely what the first angel called for in 14:7 — the bowls vindicate that proclamation.
10. The fifth bowl strikes the beast's throne directly — the seat of its authority — and darkness spreads through its kingdom. This parallels the ninth Egyptian plague (Exodus 10:21-23) and the fifth trumpet (9:2). The verb emasōnto ('they gnawed, they chewed') conveys visceral, physical agony. The darkness is both literal and symbolic — the beast's kingdom is revealed as what it always was: darkness.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Exodus 10:21-23 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
11. The sores from the first bowl (v. 2) are still active — the plagues are cumulative, not sequential. The title 'God of heaven' (ton theon tou ouranou) is used in Daniel 2:18-19, 44 and in the post-exilic books (Ezra 1:2, Nehemiah 1:4), emphasizing God's sovereign transcendence over the beast's earthly domain. The second refusal to repent (cf. v. 9) confirms the hardening pattern.
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Daniel 2:18-19. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Ezra 1:2. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Nehemiah 1:4. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
12. The Euphrates was the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire and the traditional barrier against invasion from Parthia and beyond. Its drying echoes the drying of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21) and the Jordan (Joshua 3:14-17) — but here the way is prepared not for God's people but for hostile kings. The phrase 'kings from the rising of the sun' (basileōn tōn apo anatolēs hēliou) uses the full expression for 'east,' emphasizing the geographic direction. The sixth trumpet also featured the Euphrates (9:14).
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Exodus 14:21. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Joshua 3:14-17. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
13. This is the first explicit identification of the second beast (ch. 13) as 'the false prophet' (pseudoprophētou). The unholy trinity is now fully named: dragon, beast, and false prophet. The frog imagery recalls the second Egyptian plague (Exodus 8:1-15). Frogs emerging from mouths suggests deceptive speech — the counterfeit trinity wages war through propaganda and lies, not just military force. The three unclean spirits, one from each mouth, demonstrate coordinated deception.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Exodus 8:1-15 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
14. The spirits are identified as daimoniōn ('of demons') — their signs are real but their source is evil. The phrase 'the great day of God the Almighty' (tēs hēmeras tēs megalēs tou theou tou pantokratoros) echoes the Day of the LORD tradition in Joel 2:11, 31; Zephaniah 1:14; and Malachi 4:5. The gathering (synagagein) of kings for battle uses the same verb applied to gathering the grape harvest for the winepress of wrath (14:18-19).
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Joel 2:11. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Zephaniah 1:14. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Malachi 4:5. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.

- 15.** This parenthetical word from Christ himself interrupts the battle narrative — a sudden first-person address recalling 3:3 (to Sardis) and echoing 1 Thessalonians 5:2 and Matthew 24:43-44. It is the third beatitude in Revelation. The clothing metaphor draws on the shame of nakedness (Genesis 3:7, 10) and the white garments promised to the faithful (3:4-5, 18). The placement here — between the demonic gathering and the actual battle — serves as a pastoral aside to readers.
- 15.** [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Genesis 3:7 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
- 16.** Armageddon (Harmagedōn) is the only occurrence of this word in the Bible. The specification 'in Hebrew' (Hebraisti) signals a symbolic name requiring interpretation. The most common derivation is Har Megiddo ('Mountain of Megiddo'), referencing the site of numerous decisive battles in Israel's history (Judges 5:19, 2 Kings 9:27, 23:29). However, Megiddo is located on a plain, not a mountain, which has led to alternative proposals including Har Mo'ed ('Mountain of Assembly,' Isaiah 14:13). The text presents it as a symbolic gathering point, not necessarily a literal geographic prediction.
- 16.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Judges 5:19. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
- 16.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes 2 Kings 9:27. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
- 16.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 14:13. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
- 17.** The seventh bowl is poured on the air — the medium through which all previous plagues have traveled. The declaration gegonen ('It is done!' or 'It has happened!') is a perfect tense verb indicating a completed action with permanent results. It parallels Jesus's tetelestai ('It is finished,' John 19:30) and anticipates 21:6. The voice comes from both the sanctuary and the throne — the dual source emphasizes ultimate authority.
- 18.** The theophanic signs (lightning, sounds, thunder, earthquake) have appeared at each major transition in Revelation (4:5, 8:5, 11:19), growing in intensity each time. The superlative description — unprecedented since humanity's existence on earth — echoes Daniel 12:1 ('a time of distress such as has not happened'). The fourfold repetition of forms of ginomai ('happened, occurred, appeared') emphasizes the overwhelming reality of the event.
- 18.** [TCR Cross-Reference] References Daniel 12:1 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
- 19.** The 'great city' (hē polis hē megalē) that splits may be distinct from Babylon or may be Babylon itself (cf. 11:8, 17:18). The phrase 'God remembered' (emnēsthē enōpion tou theou) echoes the Hebrew zikaron — when God 'remembers,' he acts on stored-up justice (cf. Genesis 8:1, Exodus 2:24). The triple genitive 'cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath' (to potērion tou oinou tou thymou tēs orgēs autou) piles up terms for judgment with overwhelming force.
- 19.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Genesis 8:1. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
- 19.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Exodus 2:24. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
- 20.** The cosmic language of islands fleeing and mountains vanishing echoes 6:14 and draws on the prophetic tradition of creation undoing itself before God's judgment (Nahum 1:5, Jeremiah 4:24). This is de-creation language — the stable features of the earth dissolve before God's wrath.
- 20.** [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Nahum 1:5 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
- 20.** [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Jeremiah 4:24 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
- 21.** A talent (talantiaios) weighed approximately 75 pounds (34 kg) — these are not meteorological hailstones but instruments of divine judgment on a scale beyond natural occurrence. The hail echoes the seventh Egyptian plague (Exodus 9:23-24) and Joshua 10:11, where God hurled hailstones on Israel's enemies. The third and final refusal to repent (cf. vv. 9, 11) completes the pattern of hardening — the response to every plague is blasphemy, never repentance.
- 21.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Exodus 9:23-24. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
- 21.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Joshua 10:11. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.

## 17

**Summary:** *Revelation 17 reveals the identity and fate of Babylon through an extended vision. One of the bowl angels carries John into the wilderness, where he sees a woman — 'Babylon the great, the mother of prostitutes' — seated on a scarlet beast with seven heads and ten horns. She is drunk with the blood of the saints. The angel interprets the vision: the seven heads are seven mountains and seven kings, the ten horns are ten kings who will give their power to the beast, and together they will wage war against the Lamb — but the Lamb will conquer them. In a final ironic twist, the beast and its allied kings will turn on the prostitute and destroy her.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *This chapter provides the most sustained interpretive commentary in Revelation — the angel explains the symbolism explicitly. The woman-on-the-beast image inverts the woman of chapter 12: where that woman was clothed with the sun and persecuted, this woman is clothed in luxury and persecutes. The seven mountains (v. 9) were universally understood as a reference to Rome in the ancient world. The self-destructive nature of evil is a key theme: Babylon is ultimately destroyed not by God directly but by the very forces she rode — the beast turns on its rider.*

**Translation Friction:** *The identification of the seven kings (v. 10) has generated extensive historical speculation. Various counting systems for Roman emperors have been proposed, none conclusively. We render the Greek without identifying specific historical figures. The phrase 'an eighth who belongs to the seven' (v. 11) adds further complexity. The 'one hour' of the kings' reign (v. 12) is symbolic of brevity.*

**Connections:** *The chapter draws on Jeremiah 51 (Babylon's judgment), Ezekiel 16 and 23 (Jerusalem/Samaria as prostitutes), Nahum 3:1-4 (Nineveh as a prostitute), and Daniel 7 (the beast with horns). The Lamb's title 'Lord of lords and King of kings' (v. 14) echoes Deuteronomy 10:17 and Daniel 2:47.*

<sup>1</sup>Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who sits on many waters, <sup>2</sup>With whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her sexual immorality. <sup>3</sup>He carried me away in the Spirit to a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns. <sup>4</sup>The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. <sup>5</sup>On her forehead a name was written, a mystery: "Babylon the Great, the Mother of Prostitutes and of the Abominations of the Earth." <sup>6</sup>I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly astonished. <sup>7</sup>The angel said to me, "Why are you astonished? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her — the one with the seven heads and the ten horns. <sup>8</sup>The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the abyss and go to destruction. The inhabitants of the earth — those whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world — will be astonished when they see the beast, because it was, and is not, and will be present. <sup>9</sup>This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. <sup>10</sup>There are also seven kings: five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come — and when he does come, he must remain only a little while. <sup>11</sup>The beast that was and is not — it is itself an eighth king, yet it belongs to the seven, and it goes to destruction. <sup>12</sup>The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they will receive authority as kings for one hour along with the beast. <sup>13</sup>These are of one mind, and they give their power and authority to the beast. <sup>14</sup>They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them, because he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful. <sup>15</sup>Then the angel said to me, "The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages. <sup>16</sup>The ten horns you saw, along with the beast — these will hate the prostitute and make her desolate and naked. They will devour her flesh and burn her with fire. <sup>17</sup>For God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. <sup>18</sup>The woman you saw is the great city that has sovereignty over the kings of the earth."

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The Greek pornē ('prostitute') is rendered directly rather than with the KJV's archaic 'whore.' The image of sitting on 'many waters' (hydatōn pollōn) comes from Jeremiah 51:13, where Babylon literally sat on the Euphrates and its canal system. Verse 15 will interpret the waters as 'peoples and multitudes and nations and languages' — Babylon's power rests on the populations she controls.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Jeremiah 51:13. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
2. The Greek eporneusan ('committed sexual immorality') and porneias ('sexual immorality') use the porneia word group metaphorically for political and religious unfaithfulness — the kings have entered into illicit alliance with Babylon, trading their sovereignty for her wealth. The intoxication metaphor suggests willing participation: the earth's inhabitants are not merely victims but willing partners in Babylon's corruption.
3. The transport 'in the Spirit' (en pneumatī) parallels 1:10, 4:2, and 21:10 — the four visionary translocations in Revelation. The wilderness setting contrasts with the New Jerusalem vision, where John is carried to a great mountain (21:10). The scarlet (kokkinon) beast matches the dragon's fiery-red color (12:3, pyrros). The beast is 'covered with' (gemon, 'full of') blasphemous names — not just on its heads (13:1) but everywhere.
4. Purple and scarlet were the colors of royalty and extreme wealth in the ancient world. The external adornment contrasts with the cup's contents — outward splendor concealing inner corruption. The word bdelygmatōn ('abominations') is the term used in the Septuagint for idolatrous objects and practices (cf. Daniel 9:27, 11:31, 12:11, 'the abomination of desolation'). The woman's finery will be catalogued in detail in 18:12-13 and mourned in 18:16.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Daniel 9:27. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
5. The word mystērion ('mystery') likely introduces the name as symbolic rather than being part of the name itself — 'Babylon' is a code name requiring interpretation. Roman prostitutes were known to wear headbands displaying their names, which may inform the imagery. The title 'Mother of Prostitutes' makes Babylon the source and origin of all corrupting influence, not merely one instance of it.
6. The woman is drunk not on wine but on blood — the blood of martyrs. The Greek martyrōn Iēsou ('witnesses/martyrs of Jesus') uses the word from which English derives 'martyr,' here carrying both senses simultaneously. John's astonishment (ethaumasa thauma mega, literally 'I marveled a great marvel') may reflect horror rather than admiration — the KJV's 'admiration' is misleading in modern English. The angel will rebuke his amazement in the next verse.
7. The angel's question implies that John should not be astonished — the mystery is about to be explained. The phrase 'the beast that carries her' (tou thēriou tou bastazontos autēn) emphasizes the parasitic relationship: Babylon rides the beast, dependent on its power. The interpretation that follows (vv. 8-18) is the longest angelic explanation in Revelation.
8. The formula 'was, and is not, and will be present' (ēn kai ouk estin kai parestai) is a deliberate parody of God's title 'who is and who was and who is to come' (1:4, 8). The beast's existence is a grotesque imitation of divine eternity. Its origin from the abyss (abyssou) identifies it with the demonic realm (cf. 9:1-2, 11:7). Its destination is apōleia ('destruction') — the beast's trajectory is the opposite of God's, who moves toward new creation.
9. The formula 'here is the mind with wisdom' parallels 13:18 ('here is wisdom'). The identification of seven mountains (hepta orē) with a city was unmistakable to ancient readers — Rome was universally known as the city on seven hills (Virgil, Martial, Cicero, and many others used this designation). The woman 'sits on' the mountains as she 'sits on' the waters (v. 1) and the beast (v. 3) — she derives power from all three.
10. The seven heads serve double duty: they are both seven mountains and seven kings. The temporal sequence (five fallen, one present, one future) has generated extensive debate about which Roman emperors are intended. The count depends on where one begins (Julius Caesar or Augustus?) and whether short-reigning emperors (Galba, Otho, Vitellius) are included. The text may be more interested in the symbolic pattern (the present moment within a sequence nearing its end) than in precise historical identification.
11. The beast is both distinct from the seven (an eighth) and part of them (from the seven) — it is the imperial system itself, which transcends any individual emperor. This likely reflects the Nero redivivus myth — the widespread belief that Nero would return from the dead — which the text co-opts for its own theological purposes. The repeated destination 'to destruction' (eis apōleian) confirms the beast's ultimate fate (cf. v. 8).
12. The ten kings echo Daniel 7:24, where ten horns represent ten kings. These are future rulers ('have not yet received a kingdom') whose reign is extremely brief ('one hour'). The phrase 'one hour' (mian hōran) symbolizes transient, negligible power compared to the eternal reign of God and the Lamb. They receive power 'with the beast' (meta tou thēriou) — their authority is derivative, not independent.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Daniel 7:24. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
13. The Greek mian gnōmēn ('one mind, one purpose') indicates unified intent — the ten kings act in perfect concert. Their voluntary surrender of power and authority to the beast illustrates how totalitarian systems consolidate: subsidiary powers willingly cede their autonomy to the central authority.
14. The outcome of the cosmic war is stated with stunning brevity: the Lamb will conquer. No battle details are given — the result is a foregone conclusion. The title 'Lord of lords and King of kings' (kyrios kyriōn kai basileus basileōn) comes from Deuteronomy 10:17 and Daniel 2:47, and recurs in 19:16 in reverse order. The Lamb's army is described not by military qualifications but by three spiritual qualities: called (klētoi), chosen (eklektoi), and faithful (pistoi).

14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Deuteronomy 10:17. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Daniel 2:47. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
15. The 'many waters' of verse 1 are now interpreted: they represent the global populations over which Babylon exercises dominion. The fourfold formula (peoples, multitudes, nations, languages) is another variation of Revelation's universal scope language (cf. 5:9, 7:9, 13:7, 14:6). Babylon's power base is human — she sits on people.
16. The self-destructive nature of evil is the key theological insight: the beast and its allied kings turn on the woman they once carried. The four punishments (desolation, nakedness, devouring, burning) echo the penalties for a priest's daughter who becomes a prostitute (Leviticus 21:9) and Ezekiel's description of Jerusalem's punishment (Ezekiel 16:37-41, 23:25-29). Evil eventually consumes itself.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Leviticus 21:9. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Ezekiel 16:37-41. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
17. This verse reveals the deepest irony of the chapter: even the beast's coalition serves God's purposes. God placed the intention (gnōmēn, 'purpose, resolve') in their hearts — their evil cooperation is unwittingly executing God's plan. The phrase 'until the words of God are fulfilled' (achri telesthēsontai hoi logoi tou theou) sets a divine terminus on the arrangement: it lasts only as long as God allows.
18. The final identification is explicit: the woman is a city (polis) that rules (echousa basileian, 'having kingdom/sovereignty') over the earth's kings. For the original audience, this could only mean Rome — the city that held dominion over the known world. However, Revelation's symbolic language allows the image to apply to any civilization that embodies Babylon's characteristics: imperial arrogance, economic exploitation, persecution of the faithful, and seductive luxury.

# 18

**Summary:** *Revelation 18 is an extended funeral dirge over Babylon's fall, modeled on the prophetic oracles against Tyre (Ezekiel 26-28) and historical Babylon (Jeremiah 50-51, Isaiah 13-14, 47). An angel of great authority announces Babylon's fall. A voice from heaven calls God's people to come out of her. Three groups mourn: kings who shared her luxury, merchants who grew rich from her trade, and sailors who carried her goods. The cargo list (vv. 12-13) catalogs Rome's extravagant trade, culminating shockingly in 'human souls.' A symbolic act closes the chapter: an angel hurls a great millstone into the sea, declaring that Babylon will be thrown down and found no more.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The cargo list in verses 12-13 is one of the most economically detailed passages in the Bible, cataloging twenty-eight trade items from luxury goods to basic commodities. The list follows the actual trade routes of the Roman Empire. Its final item — 'bodies and human souls' (sōmatōn kai psychas anthrōpōn) — exposes the slave trade as the foundation of Babylon's economy, placing human trafficking as the ultimate indictment. The threefold dirge structure (kings, merchants, sailors) mirrors Ezekiel's lament over Tyre but applies it to a city of far greater scope.*

**Translation Friction:** *The command 'Come out of her, my people' (v. 4) echoes Jeremiah 51:45 and Isaiah 48:20. Whether this calls for literal physical separation or spiritual/moral disengagement from corrupt systems has been debated. The text supports both readings. The 'double portion' punishment (v. 6) draws on the cup-of-wrath imagery found throughout the prophets.*

**Connections:** *The chapter is a dense tissue of Old Testament allusion: Jeremiah 50-51 (Babylon's fall), Isaiah 13-14, 47 (oracles against Babylon), Ezekiel 26-28 (lament over Tyre), Isaiah 21:9 ('Fallen, fallen is Babylon'), and Jeremiah 25:10 (sounds of joy silenced). The millstone casting (v. 21) echoes Jeremiah 51:63-64, where Seraiah throws a scroll into the Euphrates as a symbolic act of Babylon's sinking.*

1After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven with great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his glory. 2 He cried out with a mighty voice, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, and a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast, 3For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth are grew rich through the abundance of her delicacies. 4Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, so that you do not share in her sins and so that you do not receive any of

her plagues. <sup>5</sup>For her sins have piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes. <sup>6</sup>Pay her back as she herself has paid out, and repay her double according to her deeds. In the cup she mixed, mix her a double portion. <sup>7</sup>To the degree that she glorified herself and lived in luxury, give her that same measure of torment and grief. For in her heart she says, 'I sit as queen; I am no widow, and I will never see grief.' <sup>8</sup>For this reason her plagues will come in a single day — death and grief and famine — and she will be consumed by fire, because the Lord God who judges her is mighty." <sup>9</sup>The kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality and shared her luxury, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning. <sup>10</sup>They will stand far off in fear of her torment and say, "Woe, woe to the great city, Babylon the mighty city! For in a single hour your judgment has come." <sup>11</sup>The merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargo anymore — <sup>12</sup>The cargo included gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine cloth, purple, silk, and scarlet, and all citron wood, and every kind of container made from ivory, and every kind of container made from the finest wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, <sup>13</sup>Cinnamon, odours, ointments, and frankincense, wine, oil, and choice flour, wheat, beasts, and sheep, horses, chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. <sup>14</sup>The fruit that your soul craved has gone from you, and all your luxury and splendor have vanished — never to be found again. <sup>15</sup>The merchants who dealt in these things and grew rich from her will stand far off in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, <sup>16</sup>Saying, Alas, alas, that remarkable city, that was clothed in fine cloth, purple, scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! <sup>17</sup>For in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste!" Every ship captain, every seafarer, sailors, and all who make their living from the sea stood far off <sup>18</sup>Cried when they noticed the smoke of her burning and stated, What city is like to this remarkable city! <sup>19</sup>They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and mourning, "Woe, woe to the great city, where all who had ships at sea grew rich from her wealth! For in a single hour she has been laid waste." <sup>20</sup>Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets! For God has pronounced judgment for you against her. <sup>21</sup>Then a mighty angel picked up a stone like a great millstone and hurled it into the sea, saying, "With such violence Babylon the great city will be thrown down, and will never be found again. <sup>22</sup>The sound of harpists and musicians, flute players and trumpeters, will never be heard in you again. No craftsman of any craft will ever be found in you again. The sound of the mill will never be heard in you again. <sup>23</sup>The light of a lamp will never shine in you again, and the voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. For your merchants were the great ones of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery. <sup>24</sup>In her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who have been slaughtered on the earth."

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. This angel's glory (doxa) is so intense that the entire earth is lit up — a theophanic characteristic usually reserved for God himself (cf. Ezekiel 43:2, where God's glory illuminates the earth). The great authority (exousian megalēn) suggests this is an angel of the highest rank, perhaps the same one who earlier bound the dragon (20:1).
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Ezekiel 43:2. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
2. The doubled 'Fallen, fallen' repeats 14:8 and Isaiah 21:9. The three 'haunts' (phylakē, literally 'prison, guard-post') describe Babylon's post-judgment state: the once-glorious city becomes a ghost town inhabited by demons and unclean creatures. The imagery echoes Isaiah 13:21-22 and 34:11-15, where ruined cities become dwelling places for desert creatures and wild animals. The SBLGNT includes 'every unclean and detestable beast,' which some manuscripts omit.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 21:9. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 13:21-22. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
3. Three groups are implicated in Babylon's corruption: nations (who drank her wine), kings (who partnered with her), and merchants (who profited from her). The Greek strēnous ('luxury, wantonness, sensuality') appears only here and in verse 7 in the New Testament — it connotes arrogant, self-indulgent excess. The verb eploutēsan ('grew rich') introduces the economic theme that will dominate the chapter.
4. The call 'Come out of her, my people' (exelthate ho laos mou) echoes Jeremiah 51:45 ('Come out of her, my people!'), Jeremiah 50:8, and Isaiah 48:20 and 52:11. The two purposes are moral (not sharing in sins) and protective (not sharing in plagues). The verb synkoinōnēsēte ('share in, participate with') suggests complicity — remaining in Babylon means becoming co-responsible for her crimes.

4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Jeremiah 51:45. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Jeremiah 50:8. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 48:20. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
5. The Greek *ekollēthēsan* ('have clung together, have been joined') literally means 'have been glued together' — her sins have accumulated into a mass reaching heaven. The image recalls the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:4), another human construction reaching toward heaven in defiance of God. When God 'remembers' (*emnēmoneusen*) crimes, it means the time for reckoning has arrived (cf. 16:19).
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Genesis 11:4 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
6. The principle of reciprocal justice — measure for measure — is applied with intensification: not equal but double. The Greek *diplōsate ta dipla* ('double the double things') is emphatic. The cup imagery reverses the scenario: the cup Babylon used to intoxicate the nations (14:8, 17:2) is now filled double for her. This echoes Isaiah 40:2 (Jerusalem receiving 'double for all her sins') and Jeremiah 16:18.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 40:2. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Jeremiah 16:18. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. Babylon's inner monologue — 'I sit as queen, I am no widow' — quotes Isaiah 47:7-8, where historical Babylon made the same boast before her destruction. The Greek *estrēniasen* ('lived in luxury, lived wantonly') corresponds to the *strēnous* of verse 3. The punishment matches the crime exactly: glorification met with torment, luxury met with grief. The triple self-declaration (queen, not widow, no grief) expresses total self-assurance about to be completely overturned.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 47:7-8. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. The suddenness — 'in a single day' (*en mia hēmera*) — contrasts with Babylon's assumption of permanence. The three plagues (death, grief, famine) systematically dismantle her boasts from verse 7. Fire as the instrument of final destruction recalls 17:16. The closing declaration 'the Lord God who judges her is mighty' (*ischyros kyrios ho theos ho krinas autēn*) answers the beast-worshippers' question 'Who can wage war against [the beast]?' (13:4) — God can.
9. The first of three laments begins: kings (vv. 9-10), merchants (vv. 11-17a), and sailors (vv. 17b-19). Each follows the same pattern: identification, mourning, and the cry 'Woe, woe!' The kings weep for a partner lost, not from repentance. The smoke of burning recalls the destruction of Sodom, which Abraham watched from a distance (Genesis 19:28).
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Genesis 19:28. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
10. The kings stand 'far off' (*apo makrothen*) — close enough to see but too afraid to approach. The double 'Woe, woe' (*ouai ouai*) is the lament formula repeated by all three groups. The phrase 'in a single hour' (*mia hōra*) emphasizes the suddenness that punctuates all three dirges (vv. 10, 17, 19). The city that claimed eternal power fell in an hour.
11. The merchants' grief is explicitly economic: they mourn because 'no one buys their cargo' (*ton gomom autōn oudeis agorazei ouketi*). Their relationship with Babylon was transactional — they mourn a lost market, not a lost friend. The word *gomom* ('cargo, freight') introduces the detailed trade list that follows.
12. The cargo list moves from most to least valuable: precious metals and gems first, then luxury fabrics, then exotic woods and metals. The Greek *sirikon* ('silk') was an extraordinarily expensive import from China via the Silk Road. Citron wood (*xylon thuinon*) from North Africa was prized for furniture and could cost more than gold by weight. The list reflects actual Roman trade routes and consumer goods of the first century.
13. The list continues through aromatics, foodstuffs, and livestock, descending in value until it reaches its devastating climax: *sōmatōn kai psychas anthrōpōn* — literally 'bodies and souls of human beings.' The final item exposes the slave trade as the foundation of Babylon's economy. The Greek *sōma* ('body') was the standard commercial term for a slave in the ancient world. By adding *kai psychas anthrōpōn* ('and human souls'), John refuses to let the slave trade be sanitized by commercial language — these 'bodies' are human souls. The shift from genitive to accusative (*psychas*) in the Greek may emphasize the final item as a parenthetical outcry.
14. The Greek *opōra* ('ripe fruit, autumn fruit') represents the peak of enjoyment. The address shifts to second person, speaking directly to Babylon. The double negative *ou mē* ('never, not at all') with the emphatic *ouketi* ('no longer') creates a triple negation in Greek — the loss is absolute and irrecoverable. The word *lipara* ('rich, luxurious, oily') and *lampra* ('bright, splendid, gorgeous') capture the sensory appeal of Babylon's lifestyle.
15. Like the kings (v. 10), the merchants stand at a distance — close enough to grieve their lost profits but not close enough to share the destruction. The phrase 'merchants of these things' (*emporoi toutōn*) links back to the cargo list: they are defined by what they sold, including human souls.
16. The merchants describe Babylon in terms of her consumer goods — the same items from the cargo list now appear as her clothing and jewelry. This is the language of commerce applied to a city: Babylon is described the way a merchant would describe inventory. Her identity is reduced to the luxury goods she consumed. The description parallels 17:4.

17. The second 'single hour' (mia hōra) refrain reinforces the theme of sudden destruction. The Greek ērēmōthē ('has been laid waste, has been made desolate') is related to erēmos ('wilderness, desolate place') — Babylon's wealth becomes a wasteland. The third mourning group (seafarers) includes four categories: ship captains (kybernētēs), seafarers (ho epi topon pleōn), sailors (nautai), and sea-traders — representing the entire maritime economy.
18. The sailors' cry 'What city was ever like the great city?' echoes Ezekiel 27:32, the lament over Tyre: 'Who was ever destroyed like Tyre in the midst of the sea?' It also darkly mirrors the beast-worshippers' cry 'Who is like the beast?' (13:4). In all these cases, the answer that Revelation presses is: God alone is incomparable.
18. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Ezekiel 27:32 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
19. Throwing dust on the head is an ancient Near Eastern mourning gesture (Joshua 7:6, Job 2:12, Ezekiel 27:30). The third and final 'single hour' (mia hōra) refrain completes the pattern. The Greek timiotētos ('wealth, preciousness, costliness') derives from timē ('honor, price, value') — Babylon's value was entirely material, and now it is gone. All three laments follow the same structure: identification of the mourners, the double 'woe,' the description of what was lost, and the 'single hour' refrain.
19. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Joshua 7:6. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
19. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Job 2:12. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
19. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Ezekiel 27:30. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
20. This call to heavenly rejoicing contrasts sharply with the earthly mourning that precedes it. While kings, merchants, and sailors weep, heaven is told to rejoice. The Greek ekrienen ho theos to krima hymōn ex autēs literally means 'God has judged your judgment out of her' — God has taken up the saints' cause and rendered the verdict they were owed. This answers the cry of the martyrs in 6:10: 'How long before you judge and avenge our blood?'
21. The symbolic act directly echoes Jeremiah 51:63-64, where Seraiah ties a stone to a scroll and throws it into the Euphrates, declaring 'So shall Babylon sink.' The Greek hormēmāti ('with violence, with a rush') conveys sudden, forceful, irreversible destruction. Jesus used the millstone image for judgment (Matthew 18:6, Mark 9:42), but here the scale is cosmic — the entire city-system sinks like a stone.
21. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Jeremiah 51:63-64. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
22. The sixfold 'never again' (ou mē ... eti) refrain catalogs the sounds and activities of a living city being silenced forever. The list moves from entertainment (music) to industry (crafts) to daily life (milling grain). This passage closely follows Jeremiah 25:10, which lists the sounds that will cease from Jerusalem. The progressive silencing — from the cultural to the mundane — paints a picture of total civilizational collapse.
22. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Jeremiah 25:10. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
23. The silencing continues: lamplight (domestic life) and wedding celebrations (the continuation of community) cease. The charges then shift from lament to indictment: Babylon's merchants were 'the great ones' (megistanes, 'grandees, nobles') of the earth, and her 'sorcery' (pharmakeia, from which English derives 'pharmacy') deceived all nations. The word pharmakeia can mean literal drug-based sorcery or metaphorical enchantment — Babylon's seductive power operated like a drug.
24. The final indictment is the most sweeping: Babylon is responsible not only for the deaths of prophets and saints but for 'all who have been slaughtered on the earth' (pantōn tōn esphagmenōn epi tēs gēs). The verb esphagmenōn ('slaughtered') is the same word used for the Lamb in 5:6 — Babylon slaughters; the Lamb was slaughtered. This echoes Jesus's indictment of Jerusalem in Matthew 23:35 ('all the righteous blood shed on earth'). Babylon's guilt is comprehensive and systemic.

# 19

*Summary: Revelation 19 moves from the fall of Babylon to the triumph of Christ in two dramatic movements. The first half (vv. 1-10) is a scene of heavenly worship: four 'Hallelujah' choruses celebrate God's just judgment of Babylon and announce the marriage supper of the Lamb. The second half (vv. 11-21) presents the rider on the white horse — identified as 'Faithful and True,' 'The Word of God,' and 'King of kings and Lord of lords' — who descends from heaven with his armies to defeat the beast, the false prophet, and the kings of the earth. The beast and false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The fourfold 'Hallelujah' (vv. 1, 3, 4, 6) represents the only occurrences of this Hebrew word in the New Testament — it was reserved for this moment of ultimate triumph. The marriage supper of the Lamb (v. 9) draws on the ancient Near Eastern covenant-banquet tradition and the prophetic vision of the messianic banquet (Isaiah 25:6-8). The rider on the white horse conquers with a sword from his mouth (v. 15), not a sword in his hand — his weapon is his word. The name 'that no one knows except himself' (v. 12) preserves mystery even at the moment of revelation.*

**Translation Friction:** *The identity of the rider has been debated, though most interpreters identify him as Christ. The 'robe dipped in blood' (v. 13) could be his own blood (sacrificial) or his enemies' blood (drawing on Isaiah 63:1-6). The SBLGNT reading is 'dipped' (bebammenon), not 'sprinkled' (a variant). We render the Greek as given.*

**Connections:** *The Hallelujah chorus echoes Psalms 104-106, 111-113, 115-117, 135, 146-150. The marriage supper draws on Isaiah 25:6-8, Matthew 22:1-14, and 25:1-13. The rider on the white horse fulfills Psalm 45:3-5 (the warrior king) and Isaiah 11:4 (ruling with the rod of his mouth). The winepress imagery recalls Isaiah 63:1-6 and Revelation 14:19-20.*

<sup>1</sup>After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, <sup>2</sup>For true and righteous are his judgments — since he has judged the remarkable whore, which did corrupt the earth with her sexual immorality, and has avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. <sup>3</sup>And a second time they said, "Hallelujah! Her smoke rises forever and ever." <sup>4</sup>The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who is seated on the throne, saying, "Amen! Hallelujah!" <sup>5</sup>Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all his servants, you who fear him, small and great!" <sup>6</sup>Then I heard what sounded like the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns! <sup>7</sup>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. <sup>8</sup>She has been given fine linen to wear, bright and pure" — for the fine linen represents the righteous deeds of the saints. <sup>9</sup>Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." <sup>10</sup>I fell at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "Do not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers and sisters who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God!" For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. <sup>11</sup>Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse. Its rider is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and wages war. <sup>12</sup>His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems. He has a name written that no one knows except himself. <sup>13</sup>He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is called The Word of God. <sup>14</sup>The armies of heaven were following him on white horses, dressed in fine linen, white and pure. <sup>15</sup>From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will shepherd them with an iron rod, and he treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. <sup>16</sup>On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed: King of kings and Lord of lords. <sup>17</sup>Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice to all the birds flying in midheaven, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, <sup>18</sup>That you may consume the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and remarkable. <sup>19</sup>Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to wage war against the rider on the horse and against his army. <sup>20</sup>The beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed signs on its behalf — the signs by which he had deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. The two of them were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. <sup>21</sup>The rest were killed by the sword that came from the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

#### TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The Greek Hallēlouia transliterates the Hebrew hallelu-Yah ('Praise the LORD'). This is the first of only four occurrences in the New Testament, all in this chapter. The threefold attribution (salvation, glory, power) echoes the doxologies of 4:11, 5:12-13, and 7:12. The SBLGNT does not include 'honor' (timē) found in some manuscripts and the KJV.
2. The affirmation 'true and righteous are his judgments' (alēthinai kai dikaiāi hai kriseis autou) echoes 15:3 and 16:7, creating a liturgical refrain across the judgment sequence. The verb ephthairen ('corrupted, destroyed') is stronger than mere moral influence — Babylon actively ruined the earth. The

avenging of blood answers the martyrs' cry from 6:10.

3. The second Hallelujah celebrates the permanence of Babylon's destruction — her smoke 'rises forever and ever' (anabainei eis tous aiōnas tōn aiōnōn). This echoes Isaiah 34:10, where Edom's smoke rises perpetually, and Revelation 14:11, where the smoke of torment rises for those who worship the beast. The present tense 'rises' (anabainei) makes the destruction an ongoing reality in the heavenly perspective.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 34:10 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. The throne-room figures from chapters 4-5 reappear for the last time. The twenty-four elders and four living creatures have not been seen since 14:3. Their response — 'Amen! Hallelujah!' — combines Hebrew (Hallelujah) and Hebrew-via-Greek (Amēn, from Hebrew amen, 'truly, so be it') into the shortest and most complete act of worship in the book. This is the third Hallelujah.
5. The voice from the throne (not identified — possibly an angel near the throne, since it says 'our God' rather than 'me') issues a call to universal worship. The phrase 'small and great' (hoi mikroi kai hoi megaloi) encompasses the entire range of humanity, echoing Psalm 115:13 ('He will bless those who fear the LORD, small and great'). This sets up the great multitude response in verse 6.
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Psalm 115:13 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
6. The fourth and climactic Hallelujah is delivered by a voice of overwhelming scale — multitude, waters, thunder. The declaration ebasileusen ('has begun to reign, reigns') is an ingressive aorist — it marks the beginning of God's unchallenged reign, not merely its continuation. This echoes the seventh trumpet's proclamation in 11:15 ('The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ'). The Almighty (pantokratōr) title here carries the full weight of its Revelation usage.
7. The shift from judgment (Babylon the prostitute destroyed) to celebration (the Lamb's bride prepared) is abrupt and deliberate — the fall of the false woman makes way for the true. The marriage metaphor for God's covenant with his people runs throughout the Old Testament (Hosea 2:14-20, Isaiah 54:5-8, Ezekiel 16). The bride 'has made herself ready' (hētoimasen heautēn) — preparation is active, not passive. The Greek gynē can mean 'wife' or 'woman'; here 'bride' captures the wedding context.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Hosea 2:14-20. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 54:5-8. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Ezekiel 16. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. The fine linen (byssinon) contrasts with Babylon's fine linen in 18:12, 16 — same fabric, entirely different significance. The bride's clothing 'was given' (edothē) to her — grace provides what the bride wears. Yet the linen represents 'the righteous deeds' (dikaiōmata) of the saints — human obedience is real but enabled by grace. The word dikaiōmata means 'righteous acts, just requirements fulfilled,' not merely imputed righteousness but lived faithfulness.
9. This is the fourth beatitude in Revelation (cf. 1:3, 14:13, 16:15). The 'marriage supper' (deipnon tou gamou) draws on the messianic banquet tradition (Isaiah 25:6-8) and Jesus's banquet parables (Matthew 22:1-14, Luke 14:15-24). The solemn authentication 'These are the true words of God' (houtoi hoi logoi alēthinoi tou theou eisin) emphasizes the reliability of the promise — this is not wishful thinking but divine declaration.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 25:6-8. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
10. John's impulse to worship the angel (repeated in 22:8-9) underscores Revelation's insistence that worship belongs to God alone — the central issue of the entire book. The angel's self-designation as syndoulos ('fellow servant') places angels and human believers on the same level: both are servants. The closing statement 'the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy' (hē martyria Iēsou estin to pneuma tēs prophēteias) can mean either 'testimony about Jesus' or 'testimony from Jesus' — both are valid. All true prophecy points to and comes from Jesus.
11. Heaven 'opened' (ēneōgmenon, perfect passive — standing open) indicates a permanent opening, not a momentary glimpse. The white horse contrasts with the white horse of 6:2 (the first seal), though whether that earlier rider is the same figure or a counterfeit is debated. The name 'Faithful and True' (pistos kai alēthinos) was first applied to Christ in 3:14. He wages war 'in righteousness' (en dikaiosynē) — unlike all earthly warfare, this military action is entirely just.
12. The fiery eyes recall 1:14 and 2:18, identifying the rider with the exalted Christ of the opening vision. The 'many diadems' (diademata polla) — royal crowns — surpass the dragon's seven (12:3) and the beast's ten (13:1), signaling supreme sovereignty. The unknown name preserves an element of mystery even in this moment of full revelation: Christ possesses a dimension of identity that transcends all human comprehension (cf. Judges 13:18, Isaiah 9:6).
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Judges 13:18. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 9:6. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.

- 13.** The Greek *bebammenon* ('dipped, dyed') indicates the robe was immersed in blood before the battle begins. This most likely alludes to Isaiah 63:1-3, where God treads the winepress of nations and his garments are stained with their lifeblood. Alternatively, the blood may be his own sacrificial blood. The title 'The Word of God' (*ho logos tou theou*) connects to John 1:1 ('In the beginning was the Word') and to the sword from his mouth (v. 15) — this warrior's weapon is God's spoken word.
- 13.** [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 63:1-3 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
- 14.** The heavenly armies wear fine linen (*byssinon leukon katharon*), not armor — the same clothing as the Lamb's bride (v. 8). They carry no weapons. This is not a battle where the armies fight; the rider alone wages war with the sword of his mouth. The armies are present as witnesses and companions, not combatants. Their white horses match their leader's, symbolizing victory already won.
- 15.** Three Old Testament texts converge: the sword from the mouth (Isaiah 11:4, 'he will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth'), the iron rod (Psalm 2:9, 'you will break them with a rod of iron'), and the winepress (Isaiah 63:3, 'I have trodden the winepress alone'). The weapon is speech, not steel — the sword proceeds from his mouth, meaning his word is the instrument of judgment. The Greek *poimanei* ('will shepherd') again carries both pastoral and governing senses (cf. 12:5). The quadruple genitive 'the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty' is the most intensely concentrated expression of divine judgment in Revelation.
- 15.** [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Isaiah 63:3 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
- 15.** [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Isaiah 11:4 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
- 15.** [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Psalm 2:9 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
- 16.** The name is written on both robe and thigh — the thigh was where a sword hung, and the inscription would be visible where the robe fell open over the thigh. The title reverses the order from 17:14 ('Lord of lords and King of kings'), perhaps for climactic effect — 'King of kings' now comes first. This superlative title, drawn from Deuteronomy 10:17 and Daniel 2:47, makes the supreme claim: every other sovereign, human or demonic, is subordinate to this rider.
- 16.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Deuteronomy 10:17. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
- 16.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Daniel 2:47. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
- 17.** The 'great supper of God' (*to deipnon to mega tou theou*) is a grotesque counterpart to the 'marriage supper of the Lamb' (v. 9) — one is a feast of celebration, the other a feast of carrion. The imagery comes from Ezekiel 39:4, 17-20, where God invites the birds and beasts to a sacrificial feast on the mountains of Israel. The angel 'standing in the sun' (*hestōta en tō hēliō*) occupies a position of maximum cosmic visibility.
- 17.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Ezekiel 39:4. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
- 18.** The fivefold repetition of 'flesh' (*sarkas*) is grim and relentless. The social categories (kings, commanders, mighty, free/slave, small/great) match the universal categories of 6:15 — those who once hid from God's wrath now become a feast for birds. The leveling is total: king and slave are equal as carrion. This directly echoes Ezekiel 39:18-20.
- 18.** [TCR Cross-Reference] References Ezekiel 39:18-20 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
- 19.** The gathering anticipated in 16:14, 16 (Armageddon) now takes place. The beast and earth's kings assemble their armies against the rider — an act of supreme futility already declared hopeless in 17:14. The brevity of the 'battle' (described in only two verses, 20-21) underscores how one-sided the conflict is.
- 20.** No battle is described — the beast is simply captured (*epiasthē*, 'was seized'). The false prophet (the second beast of ch. 13) is identified by his deceptive signs. The 'lake of fire' (*limnē tou pyros*) is introduced here for the first time and will become the final destination of death, Hades, and the wicked (20:10, 14-15). The phrase 'thrown alive' (*zōntes eblēthēsan*) emphasizes the immediacy — no trial, no appeal, no delay.
- 21.** The text emphasizes once more that the sword comes 'from his mouth' (*tē exelthousē ek tou stomatos autou*) — this is victory through the spoken word of God, not through military violence. The verb *echortasthēsan* ('were filled, gorged themselves') brings the grim 'great supper' of verses 17-18 to completion. The entire cosmic conflict — dragon, beast, false prophet, kings of the earth, their armies — is resolved in just three verses (19-21). The Word prevails.

## 20

**Summary:** *Revelation 20 describes three decisive events. First, an angel binds Satan in the abyss for a thousand years while the martyrs are resurrected to reign with Christ (the 'first resurrection'). Second, after the thousand years, Satan is released, deceives the nations (Gog and Magog), and leads a final assault on 'the beloved city' — only to be consumed by fire from heaven and thrown into the lake of fire forever. Third, the Great White Throne judgment: the dead are raised, the books are opened, and everyone is judged according to their deeds. Death and Hades themselves are thrown into the lake of fire, and anyone not found in the book of life joins them.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The millennium (thousand-year reign) of Revelation 20 has generated three major interpretive traditions: premillennialism (Christ returns before the thousand years), postmillennialism (Christ returns after), and amillennialism (the thousand years are symbolic of the present age). The text uses *chilia etē* ('a thousand years') six times in seven verses (vv. 2-7), making it the defining concept of the chapter. The Gog and Magog reference (v. 8) draws on Ezekiel 38-39 but transposes it to a post-millennial context. The Great White Throne (v. 11) is one of the most solemn images in all of scripture — earth and heaven flee from the presence of the one seated on it.*

**Translation Friction:** *The sequence and nature of the millennium have been debated throughout church history. We render the Greek text without advocating for any millennial position. The relationship between the 'first resurrection' (v. 5) and the general resurrection (vv. 12-13) is also debated. The phrase 'the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended' (v. 5) is textually secure but interpretively complex.*

**Connections:** *The binding of Satan echoes Isaiah 24:21-22 (imprisoned host of heaven). Gog and Magog come from Ezekiel 38-39. The Great White Throne draws on Daniel 7:9-10 (the Ancient of Days and the opening of books). The book of life appears in Exodus 32:32-33, Psalm 69:28, Daniel 12:1, and throughout Revelation. The second death (v. 14) connects to 2:11 and 21:8.*

<sup>1</sup>Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key to the abyss and a great chain in his hand. <sup>2</sup>He seized the dragon — that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan — and bound him for a thousand years. <sup>3</sup>He threw him into the abyss, shut it, and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed. After that he must be released for a short time. <sup>4</sup>Then I saw thrones, and those seated on them were given authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony about Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received the mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. <sup>5</sup>The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. <sup>6</sup>Blessed and holy is the one who has a share in the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years. <sup>7</sup>When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison. <sup>8</sup>He will go out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth — Gog and Magog — to gather them for battle. Their number is like the sand of the sea. <sup>9</sup>They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. But fire came down from heaven and consumed them. <sup>10</sup>The devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet already are. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever. <sup>11</sup>Then I saw a great white throne and the one seated on it. Earth and heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them. <sup>12</sup>I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what was written in the books, according to their deeds. <sup>13</sup>The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to their deeds. <sup>14</sup>Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death — the lake of fire. <sup>15</sup>If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, that person was thrown into the lake of fire.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The key to the abyss was previously given to the fallen star in 9:1. Now it is in the hand of a heavenly angel, indicating God's sovereign control over access to the abyss. The 'great chain' (halysin megalēn) is symbolic of binding power. The angel is not identified — notably, it is not Christ but a single unnamed angel who is sufficient to bind the dragon.
2. The fourfold identification repeats 12:9; dragon, ancient serpent, Devil, Satan. The binding (edēsen, 'bound, tied up') restricts Satan's activity for a defined period. The phrase 'a thousand years' (chilia etē) appears for the first time, and will be repeated five more times through verse 7. Whether the number is literal or symbolic (representing a complete, long period) has been debated since the early church.
3. Three actions secure the binding: thrown in, shut, sealed. The purpose of the binding is specifically to prevent deception (mē planēsē, 'might not deceive') — Satan's primary weapon throughout Revelation. The phrase 'he must be released' (dei lythēnai auton, literally 'it is necessary for him to be loosed') uses the divine dei ('it is necessary') — even Satan's release serves God's purposes. The 'short time' (mikron chronon) echoes 12:12.
4. The Greek pepelekismenōn ('beheaded, executed with an axe') is specific but may represent all forms of martyrdom by synecdoche. Two groups appear to be described: the martyred and those who refused the beast's mark. The verb ezēsan ('they came to life, they lived') in the aorist tense suggests a definitive event — a resurrection. The phrase 'reigned with Christ' (ebasileusan meta tou Christou) fulfills the promise of 3:21 and 5:10.
5. The phrase 'first resurrection' (anastasis hē prōtē) implies a second resurrection (described in vv. 12-13). Whether 'first' refers to chronological sequence (a bodily resurrection before the general resurrection) or to a spiritual reality (new life in Christ that precedes physical resurrection) is the central interpretive divide between premillennial and amillennial readings. The text itself uses the same verb ezēsan ('came to life') for both the first (v. 4) and second (implied in v. 5) groups.
6. This is the fifth beatitude in Revelation (cf. 1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9). The 'second death' (ho deuterios thanatos) is defined in verse 14 as the lake of fire. The dual role — priests and kings (hierēis tou theou kai tou Christou) — fulfills the promise of 1:6 and 5:10 and echoes Exodus 19:6 ('a kingdom of priests'). The phrase 'of God and of Christ' places God and Christ on the same level as objects of priestly service.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Exodus 19:6. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. The sixth and final occurrence of 'the thousand years' (ta chilia etē). Satan's release is described with the passive lythēsetai ('will be released') — he does not escape; he is let out. The abyss is now called his 'prison' (phylakēs), the same word used for Babylon's post-destruction state in 18:2 ('a haunt/prison for every unclean spirit').
8. Satan's first act upon release is deception (planēsai) — his essential nature unchanged. Gog and Magog come from Ezekiel 38-39, where Gog is the ruler of Magog who leads a massive invasion of Israel in the last days. Here both names represent all hostile nations. 'The four corners of the earth' indicates universal scope. The comparison to 'sand of the sea' (hē ammos tēs thalassēs) recalls the Abrahamic promise (Genesis 22:17) — the enemies' number ironically echoes the blessing given to Abraham's descendants.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Ezekiel 38-39 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Genesis 22:17 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
9. The 'beloved city' (tēn polin tēn ēgapēmenēn) is Jerusalem — the city God loves (Psalm 78:68, 87:2). The 'camp of the saints' (parembolēn tōn hagiōn) uses military language for the gathered people of God, echoing Israel's wilderness encampment. The fire from heaven recalls Ezekiel 38:22 and 39:6, where God destroys Gog with fire. As in chapter 19, no battle is narrated — God's intervention is immediate and total.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Ezekiel 38:22. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Psalm 78:68. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
10. The unholy trinity is now complete in the lake of fire: dragon (thrown in here), beast and false prophet (thrown in at 19:20). The phrase 'where the beast and the false prophet already are' (hopou kai to thērion kai ho pseudoprophētēs) indicates they have been there since 19:20 — throughout the entire millennium. The duration 'day and night forever and ever' (hēmeras kai nyktos eis tous aiōnas tōn aiōnōn) uses the strongest possible expression of unending duration.
11. The 'great white throne' (thronon megan leukon) is the seat of final judgment — white signifying purity and absolute justice. The one seated is not explicitly identified (God or Christ), preserving the unity of divine judgment. The flight of earth and heaven (ephygen hē gē kai ho ouranos) is cosmic dissolution — the old creation cannot stand before the Judge's face. The phrase 'no place was found for them' (topos ouch heurethē autois) echoes 12:8 (no place for the dragon) — now creation itself finds no place to exist.
12. Two kinds of books are opened: plural 'books' (biblia) — records of deeds — and the singular 'book of life' (biblion tēs zōēs). Judgment is 'according to their deeds' (kata ta erga autōn), a principle stated three times in the chapter (vv. 12, 13). The scene draws directly on Daniel 7:10 ('The court sat in judgment, and the books were opened'). The phrase 'great and small' (megalous kai mikrous) is reversed from the usual order, perhaps emphasizing that even the great must stand before this throne.

12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Daniel 7:10. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
13. Three realms surrender their dead: the sea (those lost at sea, without proper burial), Death (the state of being dead), and Hades (the realm of the dead, Greek equivalent of Hebrew Sheol). The personification of Death and Hades as entities who 'give up' their dead suggests they are reluctant captors forced to release their prisoners. The Greek hekastos ('each one') emphasizes individual accountability — judgment is personal, not merely collective.
14. Death itself dies — Death and Hades, personified as the last enemies, are destroyed in the lake of fire. This fulfills Isaiah 25:8 ('He will swallow up death forever') and 1 Corinthians 15:26 ('The last enemy to be destroyed is death'). The 'second death' (ho thanatos ho deuterios) is defined: it is the lake of fire. The first death is physical; the second death is final separation from God. After this verse, death does not appear again in Revelation — it is gone.
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 25:8. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
15. The final criterion is not deeds alone (though deeds are judged in vv. 12-13) but inclusion in the book of life. The conditional 'if anyone' (ei tis) is stark and individual. The passive 'was not found written' (ouch heurethē gegrammenos) implies a search — the book is examined, and the name is either there or it is not. This is the last verse before the new creation vision of chapter 21. The chapter ends not with hope but with the sober reality of final judgment, making the transition to chapter 21 all the more dramatic.

## 21

**Summary:** *Revelation 21 is the climax of the entire biblical narrative: the new heaven and new earth appear, the New Jerusalem descends from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband, and God declares that he will dwell with his people. Death, mourning, crying, and pain are gone forever. The chapter then provides an extended description of the holy city: its walls, gates, foundations, and dimensions are measured by an angel. The city is a perfect cube of gold, with gates of pearl and foundations of precious stones. There is no temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. There is no sun or moon, for God's glory and the Lamb's light illuminate it. The nations will walk by its light, and nothing unclean will ever enter it.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The New Jerusalem descending 'from heaven from God' represents not human achievement but divine gift — the city comes down, it is not built up. The declaration 'Look, the dwelling of God is with humanity' (v. 3) uses the Greek skēnē ('tent, tabernacle'), fulfilling the entire tabernacle/temple trajectory of scripture. The city's cubic dimensions (v. 16) match the Holy of Holies in Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6:20) — the entire city is now the innermost sanctuary. The absence of a temple (v. 22) is the most radical transformation: in a city that is entirely God's dwelling, a separate sacred space is unnecessary. The river and tree of life in chapter 22 will complete the reversal of Eden's loss.*

**Translation Friction:** *The measurements of the city (12,000 stadia per side, approximately 1,400 miles) are clearly symbolic rather than literal — a cube of that size would extend beyond the earth's atmosphere. The number 12,000 combines 12 (tribes/apostles) with 1,000 (divine completeness). We render the measurements as given without literalizing or spiritualizing them.*

**Connections:** *The chapter draws on Isaiah 65:17-25 (new heavens and new earth), Isaiah 25:8 (death swallowed up, tears wiped away), Ezekiel 40-48 (the measured city and temple), Isaiah 60 (the glory of the new Jerusalem), Genesis 2 (Eden restored), and Exodus 25-40 (the tabernacle). The twelve gates inscribed with tribal names and twelve foundations inscribed with apostolic names unite Israel and the Church in one city.*

<sup>1</sup>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.

<sup>2</sup>I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup>I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! The dwelling of God is with humanity, and he will dwell with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them as their God. <sup>4</sup>He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the former things have passed away." <sup>5</sup>The one seated on the throne said, "Look! I am making all things new." He also said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." <sup>6</sup>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 freely from the spring of the water of life. <sup>7</sup>The one who conquers will inherit these things. I will be their

God and they will be my son. <sup>8</sup>But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars — their share will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death." <sup>9</sup> 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." <sup>10</sup>He carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, <sup>11</sup>After the splendor of God — and her light was like to a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;. <sup>12</sup>It had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names were inscribed on the gates — the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel: <sup>13</sup>There were three gates on the east side, three on the north, three on the south, and three on the west. <sup>14</sup>The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. <sup>15</sup>The angel who spoke with me had a golden measuring rod to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. <sup>16</sup>The city is laid out as a square; its length is the same as its width. He measured the city with the rod: twelve thousand stadia in length, width, and height — its dimensions are equal. <sup>17</sup> He also measured its wall: one hundred forty-four cubits by human measurement, which the angel was using. <sup>18</sup>The wall was built of jasper, and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. <sup>19</sup>The foundations of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, <sup>20</sup>The fifth was sardonyx. The sixth sardius. The seventh chrysolite. The eighth beryl. The ninth topaz. The tenth chrysoprase. The eleventh jacinth. And the twelfth amethyst. <sup>21</sup>The twelve gates were twelve pearls — each gate made from a single pearl. And the main street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass. <sup>22</sup>I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. <sup>23</sup>The city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God illuminates it, and its lamp is the Lamb. <sup>24</sup>The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. <sup>25</sup>Its gates will never be shut by day — and there will be no night there. <sup>26</sup>They will bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. <sup>27</sup>Nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The phrase 'new heaven and new earth' (ouranon kainon kai gēn kainēn) quotes Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22. The adjective kainos (qualitatively new) rather than neos (chronologically new) suggests renewal and transformation rather than replacement. The absence of the sea (hē thalassa ouk estin eti) would have been striking to a first-century audience living in a maritime world — the sea was both a source of livelihood and a symbol of chaos and danger in ancient thought.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 65:17. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
2. The city descends — it is not built by human effort but given by God. The double origin ('out of heaven, from God') emphasizes divine initiative. The bridal imagery connects to 19:7-8 (the Lamb's bride) and to the Old Testament prophetic tradition of Zion as God's bride (Isaiah 54:5-8, 62:5). The verb kekosmēmenēn ('adorned, decorated') gives English the word 'cosmetic' — the city is beautifully prepared.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 54:5-8. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
3. The word skēnē ('dwelling, tabernacle') and the verb skēnōsei ('will dwell, will tabernacle') share the same root. The SBLGNT reads laoi ('peoples,' plural) rather than laos ('people,' singular) — a significant variant suggesting that the covenant community includes multiple nations, not just one. The covenant formula 'they will be his people, and he will be their God' echoes Leviticus 26:11-12, Jeremiah 31:33, Ezekiel 37:27, and Zechariah 8:8 — it is the Old Testament's most repeated promise, here fulfilled definitively.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Ezekiel 37:27 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Leviticus 26:11-12 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Jeremiah 31:33 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Zechariah 8:8 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.

4. The wiping away of tears quotes Isaiah 25:8 ('He will swallow up death forever; the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces'). The fourfold negation — no death, no mourning, no crying, no pain — systematically reverses the conditions of the fallen world. The phrase 'the former things have passed away' (ta prōta apēlthan) declares the old order completely gone. This verse has provided comfort to grieving believers for two millennia and stands as one of the most beloved promises in scripture.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 25:8. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
5. This is one of only two times in Revelation that God speaks directly from the throne (the other is v. 6). The present tense 'I am making' (poiō) indicates an ongoing creative act, not merely a future promise. The order is 'all things new' (kaina poiō panta), not 'all new things' — the emphasis is on renewal of existing creation, not replacement. The command to write and the authentication 'trustworthy and true' (pistoī kai alēthinoi) mark this as solemn divine declaration.
6. The declaration 'It is done!' (gegonan, literally 'they have come to be') echoes 16:17 but now signals completion of creation rather than completion of judgment. The self-identification 'Alpha and Omega' (first and last letters of the Greek alphabet) was used in 1:8 — God's first and last self-identifications in Revelation bookend the entire work. The gift of living water 'freely' (dōrean, 'as a gift, without cost') echoes Isaiah 55:1 ('Come, all you who are thirsty...without cost') and Jesus's words in John 7:37-38.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 55:1. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. The verb nikōn ('conquering, overcoming') is the same word used in the promises to the seven churches (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21) — those promises are now fulfilled. The inheritance language (klēronomēsei) echoes the Old Testament land promises. The covenant formula 'I will be their God, they will be my son' (esomai autō theos kai autos estai moi huīos) combines the covenant promise of verse 3 with an adoption declaration drawn from 2 Samuel 7:14 (the Davidic covenant). The singular 'son' (huīos) is striking — each overcomer receives the same status as Christ the Son.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on 2 Samuel 7:14. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. The vice list contains eight categories, beginning with 'cowardly' (deilois) and 'faithless' (apistois) — the first two are not dramatic sins but failures of courage and trust under pressure. In the context of Revelation, cowardice means capitulating to the beast's demands rather than enduring. The word pharmakois ('sorcerers') is related to pharmakeia (18:23) and may include drug-based magical practices. The list ends with 'all liars' (pasin tois pseudēsīn), connecting to the dragon's identity as the deceiver. The second death is again identified as the lake of fire (cf. 20:14).
9. The structural parallel with 17:1 is deliberate: the same kind of angel (one of the seven bowl angels) offers to show John a woman/city. In chapter 17, it was the prostitute Babylon; here, it is the bride, the New Jerusalem. The two women represent two cities, two destinies, two possible allegiances. The designation 'the bride, the wife of the Lamb' (tēn nymphēn tēn gynaika tou arniou) combines betrothal and marriage — the wedding of 19:7 has been consummated.
10. The fourth and final visionary transport 'in the Spirit' (en pneumatī; cf. 1:10, 4:2, 17:3). The contrast with 17:3 is again deliberate: Babylon was seen from a wilderness; the New Jerusalem is seen from a high mountain. The mountain setting echoes Ezekiel 40:2, where the prophet is set on a high mountain to view the restored temple. The city is still 'coming down' (katabainousan, present participle) — its descent continues throughout the vision.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Ezekiel 40:2 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
11. The city's defining characteristic is that it possesses 'the glory of God' (tēn doxan tou theou) — God's kavod, his weighty, luminous presence, fills the entire city. The Greek phōstēr ('radiance, luminary, light-bearer') is used in the Septuagint for the heavenly bodies (Genesis 1:14-16). The jasper (iaspis) described as 'clear as crystal' (krystallizontō) does not match modern jasper (which is opaque); it likely refers to a translucent gemstone, perhaps diamond or clear quartz.
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Genesis 1:14-16. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
12. The twelve gates inscribed with Israel's tribal names draw on Ezekiel 48:30-35, where the restored city has gates named for the twelve tribes. The twelve angels at the gates serve as sentinels (cf. Isaiah 62:6, where watchmen guard Jerusalem's walls). The wall is 'great and high' (mega kai hypsēlon) — not for defense (the city has no enemies) but as a symbol of definition and security.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Ezekiel 48:30-35. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 62:6. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
13. The symmetrical arrangement — three gates on each of four sides — matches Ezekiel 48:31-34 exactly. The gates face all four directions, indicating universal access: the city welcomes people from every direction. The sequence (east, north, south, west) begins with the east, the direction of sunrise and of the temple's main entrance.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Ezekiel 48:31-34 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.

14. The twelve foundations inscribed with apostolic names complement the twelve gates inscribed with tribal names — Israel and the Church are united in one structure. The 'apostles of the Lamb' (apostolōn tou amiou) is a distinctive phrase identifying them as belonging to and sent by Christ. Ephesians 2:20 similarly speaks of the church 'built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.' The twelve-plus-twelve architecture (24 total) may connect to the twenty-four elders of chapters 4-5.
15. The measuring of the city parallels Ezekiel 40-42, where an angel measures the restored temple with a measuring rod. The rod is golden (chrysoun), befitting the heavenly city. Measuring in prophetic literature signifies divine ownership and protection (cf. Zechariah 2:1-5). Three things are measured: the city itself, its gates, and its wall.
15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Ezekiel 40-42 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Zechariah 2:1-5 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
16. The equal dimensions (length, width, height) make the city a perfect cube — the same shape as the Holy of Holies in Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6:20, a cube of twenty cubits). The entire city is the Holy of Holies: what was once the most restricted space in the world, entered by one person once a year, now encompasses the entire dwelling of God's people. Twelve thousand stadia (approximately 1,400 miles or 2,200 km) is a symbolic measurement: 12 x 1,000. A stadion is approximately 607 feet (185 meters).
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes 1 Kings 6:20. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
17. The wall measures 144 cubits (approximately 216 feet or 66 meters) — strikingly small compared to the city's enormous dimensions. The number 144 = 12 x 12, combining the twelve tribes and twelve apostles. The phrase 'human measurement, which the angel was using' (metron anthrōpou ho estin angelou) clarifies that the angel uses standard human units, making the measurements comprehensible. A cubit is approximately 18 inches (45 cm).
18. The wall material (jasper) matches the description of God's appearance in 4:3 — the city's very walls reflect God's character. The gold of the city is described as 'like clear glass' (homoion hyalō katharō) — transparent gold, a material that does not exist in the natural world. The vision transcends physical reality: this is gold you can see through, suggesting a city where nothing is hidden and light permeates everything.
19. The twelve foundation stones correspond broadly to the twelve stones on the high priest's breastplate (Exodus 28:17-20), which bore the names of the twelve tribes. The city itself functions as a priestly garment — the entire community is a 'kingdom of priests' (1:6, 5:10). The list begins with jasper, which also forms the wall (v. 18), creating continuity between foundation and superstructure.
19. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Exodus 28:17-20. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
20. The exact identification of ancient gemstones with modern equivalents is uncertain in several cases. Sardion (KJV 'sardius') is likely carnelian, a red stone. The twelve stones represent a spectrum of colors, creating a vision of extraordinary beauty. Together with the gold streets, pearl gates, and jasper walls, the city is a vision of a world where beauty is not scarce but structural — woven into the very fabric of reality.
21. Each gate is a single pearl of unimaginable size — the image defies natural possibility and signals that the New Jerusalem transcends the physical world entirely. The 'street' (plateia, singular) suggests one main thoroughfare rather than a complex street system. Again the gold is 'transparent as glass' (hōs hyalos diaugēs) — the material of ultimate value (gold) has the quality of ultimate visibility (transparency). Nothing in this city is opaque.
22. This is one of the most radical declarations in Revelation. After the entire biblical narrative has centered on God's temple — the tabernacle, Solomon's temple, the second temple, Ezekiel's visionary temple — John announces that the New Jerusalem has no temple. The reason is not absence but superabundance: God's presence is not localized in a building because it fills everything. The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb together constitute the temple — divine presence is the sacred space itself.
23. This echoes Isaiah 60:19-20 ('The sun will no more be your light by day...for the LORD will be your everlasting light'). The sun and moon are not destroyed — they are simply unnecessary. God's glory (doxa, the Greek equivalent of Hebrew kavod) provides all the light the city needs. The Lamb is the city's 'lamp' (lychnos) — Christ mediates God's glory to the city, just as a lamp mediates fire's light to a room.
23. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 60:19-20 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
24. The SBLGNT omits 'of those who are saved' (tōn sōzomenōn) found in some manuscripts and the KJV — the nations walk by the city's light without restriction. This fulfills Isaiah 60:3 ('Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn'). The kings who once served the beast (17:2, 18:3, 9) are replaced by kings who bring their glory into God's city. The vision is one of cultural richness, not cultural erasure — the nations bring their distinct contributions.
24. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 60:3. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
25. Open gates signal both security (no enemy to fear) and welcome (perpetual access). In the ancient world, city gates were closed at night for protection; these are never closed because there is no night and no threat. This echoes Isaiah 60:11 ('Your gates will always stand open, they will never be shut, day or night'). The parenthetical 'there will be no night' explains why 'by day' is not restrictive — it is always day.

25. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Isaiah 60:11 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
26. The 'glory and honor of the nations' (tēn doxan kai tēn timēn tōn ethnōn) suggests that the best of human culture, creativity, and achievement is not destroyed but redeemed — brought into the New Jerusalem and consecrated. This is not the obliteration of human civilization but its purification and fulfillment.
27. The threefold exclusion (unclean, abomination, falsehood) echoes the vice list of verse 8 and connects to the Old Testament purity laws governing access to the temple. The distinction is that this is not ethnic or ritual purity but moral and spiritual: those excluded are characterized by corruption and deception. The criterion for inclusion is the same as in 20:15 — inscription in the Lamb's book of life. The chapter ends not with exclusion but with belonging: those written in the book have a permanent home.

## 22

**Summary:** *Revelation 22 is the final chapter of the Christian Bible, completing the vision of the new creation that began in chapter 21. The chapter opens with the river of the water of life flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the city, with the tree of life on either side bearing twelve kinds of fruit and leaves for the healing of the nations. There will be no more night, for the Lord God will be their light, and his servants will reign forever. The chapter then shifts to a series of closing declarations: the angel affirms the trustworthiness of the vision, Jesus announces his imminent return three times, a solemn warning is issued against adding to or removing from the words of this prophecy, and the book closes with the cry 'Come, Lord Jesus!' and a benediction of grace.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *This chapter deliberately echoes Genesis 2-3, closing the biblical narrative in a ring structure. The river of life recalls the river flowing from Eden (Genesis 2:10); the tree of life, barred to humanity after the fall (Genesis 3:24), now stands accessible in the city with no angel barring the way. The curse of Genesis 3:17-19 is explicitly undone: 'No longer will there be any curse' (v. 3). What was lost in a garden is restored in a city — not a return to innocence but a consummation of all history. The repeated 'I am coming soon' (erchomai tachy) uses the present tense, conveying imminence and certainty rather than a timetable. The final words of Scripture are not a theological statement but a prayer and a blessing — the church crying 'Come!' and Jesus extending grace.*

**Translation Friction:** *The SBLGNT text of this chapter contains several textual variants, particularly in the closing verses (vv. 19-21), where manuscript traditions diverge on whether 'tree of life' or 'book of life' is original. We follow the SBLGNT reading throughout. The warning in verses 18-19 against adding to or removing from 'this book' originally referred to the book of Revelation specifically, not the entire biblical canon, though later reception history extended its scope. The phrase 'the Spirit and the bride say Come' (v. 17) is grammatically ambiguous — it may be an invitation to Christ to return, an invitation to the thirsty to drink, or both simultaneously.*

**Connections:** *The river of life connects to Ezekiel 47:1-12, where water flows from the temple and heals the Dead Sea, and to Zechariah 14:8, where living waters flow from Jerusalem. The tree of life with twelve fruits echoes Ezekiel 47:12, where trees along the river bear fruit monthly with leaves for healing. The entire scene reverses the curse of Genesis 3 and fulfills the promise of Genesis 3:15 — the serpent's work is undone. The threefold 'I am coming soon' connects to Jesus's promise in John 14:3. The Alpha and Omega title (v. 13) reaches back to Revelation 1:8 and Isaiah 44:6. The closing benediction of grace echoes the Pauline epistolary tradition (cf. Romans 16:20, 1 Corinthians 16:23), grounding the apocalyptic vision in the worshipping life of real congregations.*

<sup>1</sup>Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. <sup>2</sup>In the middle of its main street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, producing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup>No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will worship him. <sup>4</sup>They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup>There will be no more night. They will have no need for the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, because the Lord God will shine on them, and they will reign forever and ever. <sup>6</sup>And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place." <sup>7</sup>"A

nd look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." <sup>8</sup>I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had shown them to me. <sup>9</sup>But he said to me, "Do not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God!" <sup>10</sup>Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near." <sup>11</sup>Let the one doing wrong continue to do wrong, and let the filthy one continue to be filthy, and let the righteous one continue to practice righteousness, and let the holy one continue to be holy." <sup>12</sup>"Look, I am coming soon, and my reward is with me, to repay each one according to their work. <sup>13</sup>I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. <sup>14</sup>Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by its gates. <sup>15</sup>Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the sexually immoral and the murderers and the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. <sup>16</sup>"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the Root and the Descendant of David, the bright morning star." <sup>17</sup>The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" And let the one who is thirsty come. Let the one who desires take the water of life as a gift. <sup>18</sup>I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book. <sup>19</sup>And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. <sup>20</sup>The one who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! <sup>21</sup>The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.

#### TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The Greek lampron ('bright, radiant') is rendered 'bright' rather than the KJV's 'pure,' which more accurately captures the visual quality described. The single throne shared by God and the Lamb (tou thronou tou theou kai tou arniou) uses one article governing both nouns, indicating a shared sovereignty. The river echoes both Eden's river (Genesis 2:10) and Ezekiel's temple river (Ezekiel 47:1-12), but here the source is not a garden or a temple — it is the throne itself.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Ezekiel 47:1-12. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Genesis 2:10. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
2. The syntax is notoriously difficult: how can the tree be both 'in the middle of the street' and 'on either side of the river'? The image may depict a single great tree straddling the river (as in Ezekiel 47:7, 12, where trees line both banks), or a collective singular referring to multiple trees. The Greek xylon ('wood, tree') is the same word used for the cross in Acts 5:30 and 1 Peter 2:24. Twelve kinds of fruit (karpous dodeka) — one for each month — suggest perpetual abundance with no season of barrenness. The word therapeia ('healing, service, care') gives us the English word 'therapy.' That the nations (ethne) still need healing in the new creation is a striking detail, suggesting the new Jerusalem is not static perfection but ongoing restoration.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Genesis 2:9. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Ezekiel 47:12. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
3. The Greek katathema ('curse, accursed thing') directly reverses the curse pronounced in Genesis 3:17 ('cursed is the ground because of you'). The entire weight of the fall — thorns, toil, pain, death — is undone in this single declaration. The verb latreuo ('to serve, to worship') carries both senses simultaneously: the servants both worship and serve. In the new creation, the distinction between sacred service and daily life collapses.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Zechariah 14:11 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Genesis 3:17 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. To see God's face (opsontai to prosopon autou) is the ultimate promise of Scripture. Moses was told 'you cannot see my face, for no one can see me and live' (Exodus 33:20). The beatific vision — direct, unmediated communion with God — is here declared possible. The name on the forehead contrasts with the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:16-17); God's people bear his name as a mark of belonging, not as a brand of ownership.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Exodus 33:20. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.

5. The phrase *eis tous aionas ton aionon* ('into the ages of ages') is the strongest Greek expression for unending duration — literally 'forever and ever.' The reign promised here is not temporary or conditional but eternal. The abolition of night recalls Isaiah 60:19-20 ('the LORD will be your everlasting light') and completes the creation theme: God who said 'Let there be light' (Genesis 1:3) now becomes the light himself, making sun and lamp unnecessary.
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Isaiah 60:19 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Genesis 1:3 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
6. The phrase *pistoi kai alethinoi* ('trustworthy and true') echoes Revelation 21:5 and 19:11, where Christ himself is called 'Faithful and True.' The description 'the God of the spirits of the prophets' (*ho theos ton pneumatou ton propheton*) identifies God as the one who inspires prophetic speech — the same Spirit who spoke through the Old Testament prophets now validates this final revelation. The phrase *en tachei* ('soon, quickly, without delay') maintains the tension of imminence that characterizes the entire book.
7. This is the first of three 'I am coming soon' declarations in this chapter (see also vv. 12, 20). The Greek *erchomai tachei* uses the present tense ('I am coming') with the adverb *tachei* ('soon, quickly'), conveying both certainty and imminence. This is the sixth of seven beatitudes in Revelation (cf. 1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, 22:14). The verb *tereo* ('to keep, to guard, to observe') implies not merely reading but obeying and treasuring.
8. John's attempt to worship the angel repeats the same error from Revelation 19:10. The repetition is not carelessness — it dramatizes how overwhelming the visions are and how instinctive the impulse to worship the messenger rather than the sender. The emphatic *Kago Ioannes* ('And I, John') reasserts the human eyewitness behind the apocalyptic visions.
9. The angel's refusal is emphatic: *Hora me* ('See that you do not!' or 'Stop!'). The angel identifies himself as a *syndoulos* ('fellow servant, co-slave') — placing himself in the same category as John, the prophets, and all who keep the book's words. The command to *proskyneo* ('worship') God alone echoes the first commandment and Jesus's response to Satan in Matthew 4:10.
10. This command directly contrasts with Daniel 12:4 ('seal up the book until the time of the end'). Daniel's prophecy was sealed because its fulfillment was distant; John's is unsealed because the time (*kairos*, 'appointed time, decisive moment') is near (*engys*). The shift from sealed to unsealed marks the transition from prophetic anticipation to imminent fulfillment.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Daniel 12:4 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
11. This jarring declaration does not encourage evil but announces the finality of moral choice. When the end comes, character is fixed — there is no more time for change. The fourfold structure creates two pairs: the unjust and filthy on one side, the righteous and holy on the other. The Greek imperative forms (*adikesato*, *rhypanthetho*, *poiesato*, *hagiastheto*) function as prophetic declarations of what will be, not as commands to sin. Compare Ezekiel 3:27: 'Whoever will listen, let them listen; whoever will refuse, let them refuse.'
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Ezekiel 3:27. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
12. The second 'I am coming soon' declaration. The language of bringing a reward (*misthos*) echoes Isaiah 40:10 ('his reward is with him') and Isaiah 62:11 ('his recompense accompanies him'). The principle of repayment according to works (*kata to ergon*) runs throughout Scripture (Psalm 62:12, Proverbs 24:12, Romans 2:6) and does not contradict grace — it affirms that faith produces fruit and that God takes human action seriously.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 40:10. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 62:11. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Psalm 62:12. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Proverbs 24:12. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
13. Three titles are combined here, each drawn from different parts of Revelation and Isaiah. 'Alpha and Omega' appeared in Revelation 1:8 on the lips of God; 'the First and the Last' in Revelation 1:17 and 2:8 on the lips of Christ. Their merger here makes the highest christological claim in the book: Christ shares the identity of God. The titles also echo Isaiah 44:6 ('I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God') and Isaiah 48:12. Alpha is the first letter and Omega the last letter of the Greek alphabet — together they encompass all reality.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 44:6 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 48:12 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
14. This is the seventh and final beatitude in Revelation. The SBLGNT reads 'those who wash their robes' (*hoi plynontes tas stolas auton*) rather than the KJV's 'they that do his commandments' (*hoi poiountes tas entolas autou*), which reflects a different textual tradition. The image of washed robes connects to Revelation 7:14 ('they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb'). Access to the tree of life — denied since

Genesis 3:24 — is now the reward of the faithful.

14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Genesis 3:24. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
15. The term 'dogs' (kynes) was used in the ancient world for the morally impure and for those outside the covenant community (cf. Philippians 3:2, Matthew 7:6). The Greek pharmakoi ('sorcerers') is related to pharmakon ('drug, potion'), referring to those who practice occult arts, often involving potions. The list echoes Revelation 21:8 and functions as a vice list defining who remains outside the city — not as a physical geography but as a moral reality. The final phrase 'loves and practices falsehood' (philon kai poion pseudos) describes those whose fundamental orientation is toward deception.
16. Jesus speaks in his own name — one of the few times in Revelation where the speaker is explicitly identified as 'I, Jesus' (Ego Iesous). The dual title 'Root and Descendant of David' (he rhiza kai to genos Dauid) is paradoxical: Jesus is both David's ancestor ('Root,' as in Isaiah 11:1, 10) and David's descendant ('Offspring'). He is the source and the product of the Davidic line. The 'bright morning star' (ho aster ho lampros ho proinos) recalls Numbers 24:17 ('a star shall come out of Jacob') and connects to Revelation 2:28, where Christ promises to give the morning star to the faithful.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 11:1. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Numbers 24:17. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
17. The invitation cascades outward: the Spirit and the bride (the church) cry 'Come!' to Christ, then invite the hearer to join the cry, then extend the invitation to anyone who thirsts. The word dorean ('freely, as a gift, without cost') is emphatic — the water of life cannot be purchased or earned. This echoes Isaiah 55:1 ('Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!'). The verse functions simultaneously as a prayer for Christ's return and as an evangelistic invitation — the last great altar call of Scripture.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 55:1. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
18. This solemn warning echoes Deuteronomy 4:2 ('Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it') and Deuteronomy 12:32. The verb martyro ('I testify, I bear witness') places this under oath. Originally this referred specifically to the book of Revelation, not to the entire biblical canon — the 'canon' as a concept did not yet exist when this was written. However, the placement of Revelation at the end of the Christian Bible has given these words a broader canonical resonance in the history of reception.
18. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Deuteronomy 4:2 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
18. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Deuteronomy 12:32 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
19. The SBLGNT reads 'tree of life' (xylou tes zoes) rather than the KJV's 'book of life' (bibliou tes zoes). The 'book of life' reading likely arose from a scribal confusion of xylou ('tree') with bibliou ('book') — an easy error in manuscript transmission. We follow the SBLGNT critical text. The penalty mirrors the offense with poetic precision: those who take away from the book will have their share taken away from the tree and the city just described. The warning protects the integrity of the prophetic message.
20. The third and final 'I am coming soon' — and this time it receives a response. The exchange is the heart of early Christian worship: Christ promises his return, and the church answers with the prayer 'Come, Lord Jesus!' (Erchou kyrie Iesou). This is the Greek equivalent of the Aramaic Maranatha ('Our Lord, come!') preserved in 1 Corinthians 16:22. The single word Amen bridges the two speakers — it may be John's affirmation of Christ's promise, or the congregation's liturgical response, or both. These are among the most intimate words in the New Testament: a direct, personal exchange between the Lord and his people.
21. The final words of the Christian Bible are a benediction of grace. The SBLGNT reads simply 'with all' (meta panton) without 'you' (hymon) or the closing 'Amen,' both of which appear in some manuscript traditions and are reflected in the KJV. The simplicity is striking: not 'with the saints' or 'with the churches' but 'with all' — the widest possible scope. That the Bible ends not with a warning, not with a doctrine, not with a command, but with grace is itself a theological statement. The epistolary closing (typical of Paul's letters: Romans 16:20, 1 Corinthians 16:23, Galatians 6:18) grounds this cosmic apocalypse in the life of actual congregations who would hear it read aloud in worship.