

Revelation – Commentary, Part 1

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Introduction

We use a simplified punctuation of the text. The Bible Gateway early text presentations (1550 Stephanus, 1881 Westcott-Hort, 1894 Scrivener) are all unmarked. However, “correct” vocalization of Greek is nearly impossible for many Greek readers (ourselves included) so we added punctuation only as a reading and spelling aid. The customary Greek punctuations have no meaning for most readers; we’re not going to give a minimum of a year of silence in listening, just to apprentice as Greek cantors: so, in keeping with official Greek policy we have reduced punctuation to a single accent, the acute or oxia. Single syllable words are left unaccented; since, there is only one place to receive the emphasis: so, any accent on a single syllable word marks a special difference, distinguishing, “or”, from an article; or denoting an interrogative; and the like. With weakening vision, due to age, we also found breathing marks impossible to read: so, we simply eliminated smooth breathing, and replaced rough breathing marks with the (silent) English letter, h, which, we hope clarifies any spelling differences. We hope that this makes Greek easier for you to read, and we will continue to employ this simplified method, until a better one presents itself.

After many months, in some cases years of prayer (James 1:5), the Spirit of God is unveiling meanings from Revelation to us (John 16:13): an insight here, and understanding there; gradually and slowly many, but not all pictures come into focus; not all at once, over long periods of time and intensive study with prayer. Nothing good can be found in this paper unless it came from God.

Bibliography

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%201&version=KJV>

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<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+1&version=TR1550>

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+1&version=WHNU>

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+1&version=SBLGNT>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_New_Testament_papyri

A preliminary comparative text criticism study can be formed by aligning three of these sources side by side in parallel columns:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+1&version=TR1550,WHNU,SBLGNT>

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+1&version=WHNU;SBLGNT;THGNT>

A more rigorous study may be found at:

https://www.bibletranslation.ws/download/Robinson_Pierpont_GNT.pdf

All of the RP notations used in my paper were gleaned from this source, rather than directly from the RP New Testament. It is physically too hard for me at 86 to hold up a book of this weight and edit at the same time. The book was only consulted if questions arose.

For those who wish to delve more deeply into Revelation text criticism: this is the most helpful, very technical, resource I've found at this date:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345971916_Hernandez_The_Greek_Text_of_Revelation_Oxford_Handbook_on_Revelation

Hoskier, Herman Charles, *Concerning the Text of the Apocalypse*, two Volumes (Wipf & Stock, Eugene, 2015 reprint of the 1929 original; 751 and 649 pages). This is necessary essential reading in order to grasp some of the scope, complexity, and difficulty of textual criticism, especially in Revelation.

Perschbacher, Wesley J., ed., *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Hendrickson, Peabody, MA, 2004; 449 pages). Newer editions of this work are poorly bound and easily fall apart after brief use.

Robinson, Maurice A., and Pierpont, William G. *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (Chilton, Southborough, MA, 2005; 587 pages). The Appendix, pages 533ff is necessarily essential reading in order to grasp the extent of modern (2000 plus) explorations.

Westcott, Brooke Foss, and Hort, Fenton John Anthony, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (MacMillan, a reprint of the 1885 original, 620 pages). Hereafter referred to as 1885.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revelation_1

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Christianity#Anatolia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_churches_of_Asia

Genre

Polydimensional Theatrical Extravaganza

Within a few years after 1955, “This is Cinerama” (1952), finally wended its way to Cleveland, Ohio. Not long afterward, “Around the World in 80 Days” (1956), also came to town. Cinerama was a whole new genre of film. The theater had to be large enough to accommodate a super-giant oversized screen facing the audience. Two other oversized screens joined the center screen: but, these angled forward, enveloping the audience in something resembling a parabola, except that its sides were flat. The projectors were also specialized, synchronized to present a uniform picture. The sound track, as I recall, was eight track, surround sound, also synchronized with the action. We were very fortunate to be forced to sit in the first three rows, dead center: this put us inside the scope of the three screens, as though we were sitting on the stage, or at least it felt that way.

In 1970, at the World Fair, in Osaka, Japan, we saw the first 360 degree film presentations. I seem to remember that some of these were domed

like a planetarium: so, the picture and sound were presented from overhead, as well as all around on every side. Later, I saw the same sort of presentation in Tulsa, Oklahoma, at a Bible story exhibition.

In 1974, IMAX, came to Spokane, Washington. After 1976, I would see my first IMAX film. After Cinerama, it was less spectacular for me.

The point is this. Nearly two-thousand years before mankind would ever attempt such a technological presentation, God presented, and John wrote a completely multi-dimensional, spherical surround spectacular in living reality. We, like spiders dangling on strings, are confronted with multi-dimensional action on every side, overhead, and even beneath our feet.

John uses the exclamation, Look!, Ἴδου, about 26 times. He either invites us, with great excitement, to turn and see something new; or he asks us to pause to examine something profound, with microscopic detail.

In short, we believe that John presents a genre, not really found anywhere else in the Bible; a genre, except for planetariums, not seriously attempted by mankind until the late twentieth century.

We invite you to read Revelation as though you were experiencing this genre for the very first time; as though you were a spider, dangling by a thread in a great forest, observing all the action going on at the same time, in the total sphere around you. Please do not read Revelation as you would read an ordinary book.

In brief, one expression of the genre of Revelation is that it is a polydimensional theatrical extravaganza.

Extraordinary Musical Theater

Many have observed that Revelation is roughly fifty percent hymns. These hymns express great tragedy of life in places; yet, unexcelled joy in others. However, Revelation ends in great hope and joy with the unveiling of the heavenly city, the City of God. So, Revelation is certainly not opera: for, opera is essentially tragedy set to music. Nor does it fit the mold of classical Greek comedy and tragedy. Long before Rodgers (b1902) and Hammerstein (b1895) were even glints in their parent's eyes, God invented this new theatrical form.¹

So, another perspective expressing the genre of Revelation is that it is musical theater: possibly, the greatest example of musical theater ever produced. Don't say it has no dancing: for, the movements of great demonic, human, and spiritual armies are certainly a kind of dance; ships also dance upon the raging waters.

An Evangelism Tract

Having detailed the sinful faults of seven asian ekklesiae; having elaborated the sins of Israel and Judah: in Revelation 22:17, John writes this as the one, only and final cure of all these failures of mankind:

“The Spirit and the Bride are talking! Come!
Let anyone hearing say, ‘Come’!

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Musical_theatre#:~:text=The%20Black%20Crook%20was%20a,turn%20of%20the%2020th%20century.

Let anyone thirsting, come!

Let anyone willing, receive the Water of Life as a gift!”

The theme of Living Water is among John’s favorites: which he touches on in John 4:10; John 4:13-14; John 4:23-24; John 7:37-39; as well as several times in Revelation: Living Water always refers to the Holy Spirit. Nor is John first to pursue such ideas: Genesis 1:2; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 11:19-20. Paul revisits these ideas in 2 Corinthians 3:3.

The Living Water, which is the Holy Spirit, in Revelation 22:1 leads immediately to the Tree of Life, which is Jesus, in Revelation 22:2. The point is made: you cannot be begotten from above (John 3:3, 5, 16) without both the Son and the Spirit. Paul says the same thing in Romans 8:9

Revelation fits the genre of an evangelism tract: for, it deals with a variety of major sin problems, before presenting the final cure in the Spirit and the Son.

A Fifth Gospel

The first four Gospels, for the most part, disclose the humanity of Jesus, the Christ of God, The Messiah of Israel, the Son. Revelation, for the greater part, discloses the deity of Jesus: His parity with the Father, His enthronement, His conduct of wars (He fights with the sword of His mouth), His victories, His judgments, His reaping, His punishments of repentant and unrepentant adversaries, His marriage, His Feast, His eternal residence in parity with the Father, with His bride in the Heavenly Temple, His light in parity with the Father, His existence as

the Tree of Life standing before the Father's throne, His proclamation of the Spirit as the agent of power in Salvation.

Revelation fits the genre of a fifth Gospel.

Not a Doomsday Chronicle

The one genre that does not fit, at all, is that of a Doomsday Chronicle: for, the Father speaks in terms of making all things new (Revelation 21:5). An old and idolatrous temple is replaced with a new spotless heavenly temple; an old Jerusalem is replaced with a new Jerusalem; an old Aretz is replaced with a new Aretz; an unbelieving people is replaced with a new believing people of God; an old Sun is replaced with the heavenly light of Father and Son together.

Revelation does not fit the genre of Doomsday Chronicle: for, the story is not about the destruction of earth; but rather, of its re-creation.

Purpose

We believe that God follows the same plan that He specified in Matthew 28:18-20

“Jesus came and told them, saying, ‘All authority is given unto me in heaven and upon earth. Therefore, while you are scurrying about, *make disciples* of all the nations (εθνη), baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to guard everything, as

much as I have commanded you. Look! I Am with you all the days, until the end of the age.’ ” — Our Translation

The highlight of this mandate is its imperative, which is, *make disciples*. This is a two part process of baptizing and teaching, the two operative participles, which follow the imperative, *make disciples*. Human beings baptize with water: but, Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit and with fire. We submit to you that the baptism we are seeking here is the baptism with/by the Holy Spirit: in which the miracle of begetting from above (sometimes called being born again) is performed in the human heart (the center of the human spirit, not the muscle that pumps blood). This baptism in new birth results in a step-by-step process of picking up our crosses and following Jesus into the fire, by which we will be taught and learn everything we ever need to know. In this process the Spirit of God engraves the Law of God on our hearts; that which was always impossible by human effort, is now made possible by grace, through faith: we love the Law as we love following Jesus. Thus, human evangelists, at the direction of the Spirit of God, assist Him in His work. This teaching ministry is not simply to learn everything that Jesus did and taught: but to guard what Jesus did and taught. The Temple priests, paced the walls night and day looking for enemies within and without; they attacked all adversaries, and defended the Temple with their lives: this is our watchmanship our guard duty, to defend the things of God, against all adversaries, to the death; in such a way, that we love our enemies. We are not mere spectators in this teaching/learning process; nor are we simply good students: no, we are priests who watch, guard, protect with our lives. Nor, is it sufficient in this teaching/learning process to hear, read, study, memorize, and meditate upon the words of God: we must eat them, devour them, digest them as they are cut (engraved) into our hearts. We must read the Bible with fervor and intensity. We must devour the words as if they were a tasty and delicious feast set before a famished person... a dinner... The Dinner at the Table of the Father, Son, and Spirit.

When John gives the final answer in Revelation 22:17,

“The Spirit and the Bride are talking! Come!
Let anyone hearing say, ‘Come’!
Let anyone thirsting, come!
Let anyone willing, receive the Water of Life as a gift!”

... we believe he is following the mandate of Matthew 28:18-20. When we thirst and partake of the water of life without cost to us, of our own free wills, we receive the water of life, which is the Holy Spirit; we are baptized with the Spirit; we are begotten from above; we begin the walk following Jesus carrying our own crosses with us. This is the single cure for all the corruptions of all people, everywhere.

This mandate unfolds in a particular geographic pattern described in Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power, [after] the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You will be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, [and] in all [the] Judaea, [and] Samaria, and unto the end of the land (της γης, Ha’Aretz).”

We believe that the land (της γης, Ha’Aretz) is intentional. For the Apostles and their teams first setting out, the idea of making disciples in the land (της γης, Ha’Aretz) is mind boggling enough, an overwhelming concept for those who have never strayed far from Galilee all their lives. It would be as if I, an eighteen year old from Cleveland, were told that I was to be part of a small discipleship ministry to all Ohio, I would have been buried by the magnitude and weight of responsibility: I might have failed before I even started. However, as Acts unfolds, these first Apostolic discipleship teams watch their teams hunted and killed by

their worst nightmare; they watch as the Saul is turned to Christ; they watch as Saul is made Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles; they watch as Paul goes forth, himself often persecuted, victoriously taking the Gospel into the Pagan Roman world: and now they see that even the land (της γης, Ha'Aretz) can come to have a deeper, larger, more magnificent meaning. But, they started in Jerusalem. They started in Jerusalem.

The purpose of Revelation is evangelism, teaching/training, and discipleship. The Holy Spirit is the next Big Thing. After the Holy Spirit, the second Advent of Jesus, with His Father is the next, next Big Thing.

This means that, in order to be obedient to the purpose of Revelation, we must crucify ourselves (Matthew 16:25; John 15:13; 1 John 3:16). We are not the next big thing. Father, not our wills: but, Your Will be done.

Author

God, indicating the Father, is specifically named as the primary author of Revelation: which we believe to be the case for the whole Bible. Jesus is named as the secondary author or main communicator of Revelation: hence, His Name is the Word of God (Revelation 19:13), which is again, the primary case throughout the Bible.

Revelation was sent by a messenger, we believe to be the Holy Spirit: but, this is not definitive. This act of transmission could be considered a kind of authorship.

The human author of Revelation is John, most likely the Apostle John; this point is disputed by many, but not worth arguing: the text simply says John.

However, if not the Apostle, and Evangelist John: then, by what authority was Revelation included in the Bible. Severeral themes, popular with the Apostle, and Evangelist John are dominant in Revelation: specifically, the baptism of the Spirit, and the antichrists. We believe that this sufficiently establishes that the Apostle, and Evangelist John is the human author of Revelation.

Date

The date of writing is also disputed. Many prefer a date prior to the First Jewish-Roman war, which began around 66 AD. Others prefer a date late in the first century: for, it is doubtful that John could have lived past the year 100 AD. Even if John were only 20 at the Crucifixion of Jesus, he would still be 87 at the turn of the century. John could still be 123 at the end of the Third Jewish-Roman War in 136 AD. A major point between the two opinions is that the first group sees Revelation as prophetic; while the second group sees Revelation more as history used as a foundation for looking centuries and even millennia into the future.

That being said, the tradition that the death of Antipas was in 92 AD², or possibly during the reign of Nero (54-68) or Domitian (81-96), means that a later date is much preferred: possibly even proved.

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antipas_of_Pergamum

The date of writing is simply unknown, and we intend to leave it there: further argument is pointless.

Text

We, will as far as possible, attempt to recover the oldest text known. Revelation Criticism I and Revelation Criticism II were written in pursuit of this goal. We were unable to complete a deeper study of manuscripts in general, or Aleph/Sinaiticus in particular: so, we are working with WH as a practical, if temporary, Vorlage. We transcribed a Westcott-Hort New Testament (1881) copy of Revelation with added accents.

Revelation 1

The Our Translation will be modified as we proceed: since, our studies have led us to WH for our best available temporary Vorlage, rather than SBL. Also, we have learned along the way how some words are better interpreted, while others no longer fit the context: so, Our Translation, must adapt and change: it is now Your Translation.

Rv. 1:1 - αποκάλυψις ιησού χριστού, ήν έδωκεν αυτώ ho θεός δείξαι τοις δούλοις³ αυτού, ή ά δει γενέσθαι εν τάχει, και εσήμανεν αποστείλας διά του αγγέλου αυτού τω δούλω αυτού ιωάννη⁴,

³ Aleph/Sinaiticus has *αγίοις*.

⁴ 1885 has *ιωάνει*.

Rv. 1:1 - An unveiling of Jesus Christ, which [~~the~~]⁵ God gave [~~to~~] Him, to show⁶ to His servants, which must be brought forth with speed. He symbolized [it]⁷, sending [it] through His messenger, to His servant, John,

The author is God the Father; The Son, as is also John, is one among many messengers employed in the communication of the book. Having noted that distinction, the communication between Father and Son is unique; the two are so closely paralleled as to be exactly equal in all respects⁸: hence, the Son bears the Name, Word of God. At least one person has noted that the Father and Son are never, so much as a hair's breadth apart.

Hence, this unveiling is about Jesus Christ.

Aleph/Sinaiticus has, αποκάλυψις ἰϛ^[τησοῦ] χϛ^[χριστοῦ] ἠὲν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ἠὲ θε^[θεός] δείξαι τοῖς ἁγίοις αὐτοῦ ἡ δὲ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει καὶ ἐσήμανεν ἀποστείλας διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ ἰωάννῃ. These abbreviations and the spelling variation are easy enough to explain: if that were the only problem with Aleph we might be following an Aleph Vorlage.

Of special interest is the word ἁγίοις, saints, that seems to differ from δούλοις, servants or slaves, by a wide margin: but, δούλοις is the title

⁵ [~~xxx~~] denotes a word in Greek that was removed in English.

⁶ The aorist δείξαι, to be showed, is awkward, the present tense results in a smoother English idiom: but the verb is definitely a past tense.

⁷ [xxx] denotes a word not in Greek that was added in English.

⁸ having parity

commonly given to Prophets, so saints and servants are not so far apart after all. Still, it would be nice to know which word is original: for, saints, refers to all Christians; while, servants, seems to emphasize Christian leadership. Alas, we have no way of knowing, at this point, which is original, which is one reason we are staying with WH as our Vorlage.

The Father communicates with the Son by extraordinary communication: He gave the unveiling to Him. The Son is both the message and the messenger: this is the unveiling of Jesus Christ as God, which He Himself shows. He symbolized it: a symbol is a visual representation of a, usually invisible, reality, when that reality is present.⁹ The unveiling is sent by His messenger, which we believe, but John does not say, and we cannot prove: that only the Holy Spirit is qualified to be this messenger. The unveiling goes to John, which, on behalf of Jesus is to be disseminated to His saints or servants, whichever turns out to be correct.

Rv. 1:2 - ὃς εμαρτύρησεν τον λόγον του θεού και την μαρτυρίαν ιησού χριστού ἡόσα είδεν.

Rv. 1:2 - who witnessed the Word of [the] God, the Testimony of Jesus Christ; whatever he saw.

Witnessed and testimony represent the same Greek word, the change is to satisfy English idiom: witnessed, speaks to the evidence one sees;

⁹ A waving flag is symbolic of the presence of the wind. The stirring of the waters of Siloam is symbolic of the presence of the angel. John describes what the symbols look like in the presence of their realities.

testimony, speaks to the reporting of that evidence in God's court of Law.

Rv. 1:3 - μακάριος ὁ ἀναγινώσκων καὶ οἱ ἀκούοντες τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας καὶ τηροῦντες τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ γεγραμμένα ὅτι ἡμεῖς οἱ ἀκούοντες τὸν καιρὸς ἐγγύς.

Rv. 1:3 - Blessed, [is] the one knowing exactly; [are] those hearing the words of the prophecy; and those guarding [that] having been written in her: for, the time is near.

The word frequently translated as reader, ἀναγινώσκων or ἀνα + γινώσκων, means that which is upward from or above knowledge: such a person is far above being a mere reader. The reader sees every detail, every flaw, every letter, every mark, every notation: but, only sounds proceed from the reader's mouth. Some readers practice for hours, even days, so that their presentation is flawless. A novice cantor may listen in silence to experienced cantors for a year, before beginning to intone the first note: the chanting must be flawless. This exacting attention gives the reader or cantor an insight into Scripture, that few others attain, especially before the printing press made books more easily available to common folks like us.

This is prophecy which emphasizes declaration and preaching, not necessarily of distant future events.

The time is near. The kingdom of God is at hand. We expect the bulk of the fulfillment to lie within John and his reader's lifetimes: the first century or possibly carrying over into the second century. However, while this is not a long-range prophecy; God never changes; so, if the behaviors and conditions presented here are repeated in the future,

similar outcomes are expected: this is called the application of Scripture, not the specific fulfilment of a specific prophecy.

Rv. 1:4 - ἰωάννης¹⁰ τὰς ἑπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις τὰς ἐν τῇ ἀσίᾳ χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄντος καὶ τοῦ ἦν καὶ τοῦ ἐρχόμενου καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἑπτὰ πνευμάτων ἢ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ

Rv. 1:4 - John, to the seven ekklesiae¹¹, [~~the~~] in [~~the~~] Asia, grace to you. Peace from the One Being; the Now Is¹²; the One Coming; from the Seven Spirits, Which, [are] before His Throne; This, “ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος”, is God the Father: not God the Son.

An ekklesia is not at all like a modern church; nor are these cities like modern cities. These cities have a greater resemblance to castles; some, if not all, are walled, in case of attack; the gates are guarded by soldiers. If the trumpet sounds, every citizen falls out, to hear what is happening: is it the call to arms, or is it an important civic message? We are not told what percentage of the town is repentant and turned to Christ. We are not even told that the leaders are Christian. We are only told, here, that God the Father and the Seven-fold Spirit are addressing them with grace and peace. We know, primarily from Acts that mission work has been going on here for a while.

¹⁰ 1885 has ἰωάννης.

¹¹ Ekklesia/ekklesiae means called out. We cannot overstress this meaning. You are the called out or you are being called out. You are a soldier for Christ. Report for duty.

¹² We distinguish the present, is, from the imperfect by adding the helping word now, is now, now is.

John explicitly uses the word, *ἐκκλησίαις*, not the word, *συναγωγή* (Rv. 2:9; 3:9). While, *ἐκκλησίαις*, can refer to the calling out of all city citizens for official action: we reject that idea, specifically because John pictures it as a menorah. We also know that the first churches were formed of converts from Jewish synagogues (*συναγωγή*): so, depending on the level of acceptance or rejection, the first churches were sometimes Jewish synagogues and sometimes not Jewish synagogues. The fact that John uses the word, *συναγωγή*, pejoratively, leads us to believe that John does not use the word, *ἐκκλησίαις*, as a synonym for, *συναγωγή*. What else might John mean? After long painful and prayerful consideration, we have come to believe that John uses the word, *ἐκκλησίαις*, which means called out, to refer to the character of a unique people separated from both Judaism and paganism: thus, *ἐκκλησίαις*, does seem to mean something like church after all: but its force is being called out¹³. However, we must tread lightly here: for, the distinction is a fine one, seeing that at least one of the churches fits the perfect description of, *συναγωγή*, while other churches, obviously, are still struggling with their separation from Judaism. After all, a true Jew is a Christian, and a true synagogue is a church. Jesus loves them all regardless of their circumstances. The difference between a synagogue and a church, or a ruler and a bishop is a matter of the heart: the one loves God sincerely, while the other does not... but, the outward appearance may be indistinguishable. We will revisit this puzzle in the next two chapters.

¹³ *Ekklesia/ekklesiae* means called out. We cannot overstress this meaning. You are the called out or you are being called out. You are a soldier for Christ. Report for duty.

Rv. 1:5 - και από ησού χριστού ho μάρτυς ho πιστός ho πρωτότοκος των νεκρών και ho άρχων των βασιλέων της γης τω αγαπώντι ημάς και λύσαντι¹⁴ ημάς εκ¹⁵ των ημαρτιών ημών εν τω हाίματι αυτού

Rv. 1:5 - from Jesus Christ, the Witness, the Faithful, the Firstborn of the dead, the Ruler of the kings of the land (της γης, Ha' Aretz), the One Loving us, the One Freeing¹⁶ us from our sins by His blood,

Is this our first encounter with the second attributive position as a dramatic effect? Imagine an announcer calling out the name of Jesus Christ in a very loud voice to a very large audience; then insert a dramatic pause with each, “the”, followed by a comma; before giving the equally loud description.

The kings of the land are Saul, David, Solomon, and all the kings of Israel, until its demise in 722 BC; as well as all the kings of Judah, at least until its destruction in 586 BC.

The use of the word γης (γη, γης, γη, γην, no plurals were found) as in της γης is spectacular. Revelation uses the genitive singular, γης, 42 times; the accusative, γην, 25 more times; the nominative and dative, γη, according to our count, a few times: the total manual count, 82 times in

¹⁴ Stephanus has λούσαντι √ λούω: to wash. WH has λύσαντι √ λύω: to loose, release, free. These two words are obviously closely related in Greek.

¹⁵ Stephanus has από; the difference between από and εκ is minuscule.

¹⁶ The aorist λύσαντι, Who was freeing, is awkward, the present tense results in a smoother English idiom: but the verb is definitely a past tense.

all. This is a sufficiently large number to define much of the location of Revelation; especially, since, the word κόσμου (κόσμος, κόσμου, κόσμω, κόσμον) is only used three times (Revelation 11:15; 13:8; 17:8). Nevertheless, γη, can mean dirt, earth, land, or even world (though not so much in contrast with κόσμος, which is John's favorite word for world, for example, John 3:16). The real question being raised is what does, γη, mean to John?

John gives at least three references to Psalm 2 (Revelation 2:27; 12:5; 19:15). What does Psalm 2 have to say about, γη? The Septuagint has some form of, γη, in Psalm 2:2 (τῆς γῆς), 8 (τῆς γῆς), and 10 (τὴν γῆν), which is very similar to the phrases used by John. In each of these places the Leningrad Codex has Aretz, the Land: more specifically, in the Hebrew mindset, the Land of Abraham, Isaac, Israel; the Land Moses sought, but never entered; the Land of Promise; the title of the national newspaper today, Ha' Aretz, The Land. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haaretz>).

You can work out the details for yourself: but, throughout the Old Testament, God does not have much of a complaint against Gentiles. Throughout Judges, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, and many of the Prophets, God's major complaint is about the idolatry of the Israelites and Jews. Yes, they go astray worshiping the many Canaanite idols: but, God is concerned about the Israelites and Jews, rather than the Canaanites (Isaiah chapters 1 and 2). When Israel is destroyed in 722, and Judea is failing, the prophet asks how God can punish the Holy People with an unclean enemy (Habakkuk 1). Jesus' main adversary is Pharisaism, not Gentiles: Pharisaism led the attacks against early Christianity. The ugly KJV mistranslation of Psalm 2, leads us to believe that Gentiles are the problem. No, the rod of iron is especially intended for atheist and idolatrous Israelites and Jews (Matthew 21:38-39; Mark 12:7-8). Before the Crucifixion, they killed the Prophets (Matthew 23:37; Luke 13:34. After the Crucifixion, they killed the

Apostles. Yet, the rod of iron may be fittingly applied to others after the first century.

What is the rod of iron? It is the specific promise to return Israel/Judah to the idolatries and slaveries of Egypt. The rod of iron is a uniquely Egyptian idea. Evidently, the Egyptians maintained potter's vessels representing all of their vassals and enemies. If any adversary stepped out of line, Pharaoh would smash that adversary's representative clay vessels with his iron scepter.¹⁷ This meant that all diplomacy had ended, and a status of war was begun. God had little reason to declare war on very many Gentiles: they were not under the Law and had not yet broken it.

Aretz, means γη, for John and us, and γη means Land, the Land of Israel. Revelation is not a prophecy of the end of the world; Revelation is a prophecy about the termination of Israel and replacing it with a new kingdom (Matthew 21:43).

This does not give us warrant to accuse or even blame Israel/Judah for the death of Jesus. Ezekiel 18 forbids the assignment of sin to any other person or generation: Judaism is free from all such charges. Elsewhere, we learn that the death of Christ buys the redemption of all mankind (John 3:16): so, in this sense, all mankind, Jew and Gentile alike, stand accused or to blame for the death of Jesus. The sins of an individual belong to that individual alone.

However, chapters 2, 4, 15, and 22 do not mention, ηη γη, Ha'Aretz, at all; chapter 3 only once. The 81 remaining occurrences are distributed among the remaining 17 chapters: over 4.76 instances per chapter on

¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Execration_texts

average. This means that, הַאֶרֶץ, Ha'Aretz, is one of John's principal themes. When we couple this with our understanding of the Jewish-Roman Wars, we see that Ha'Aretz ceased to exist as a legal entity between the years 136 and 1948: the Romans had renamed the city Aelia Capitolina (which may have precipitated the third war); they plowed over the city limits and temple mount; they built a new city on the site (Aelia Capitolina); they populated the surrounding lands of Judea with Romans (many of them soldiers); they erected statues of Jupiter and Hadrian on the temple mount; they made it illegal for Jews to enter Aelia Capitolina (formerly Jerusalem) except on Tisha B'Av¹⁸ (the great day of mourning). This means that all of John's references to, הַאֶרֶץ, Ha'Aretz, are either before 136, after 1948, about some mystical sense of Ha'Aretz, or about the new heavenly Ha'Aretz.

But, after 1948 seems unlikely, because of the repeated references to quickly, soon, and the like. If after 1948 we may expect the absolute annihilation of Israel and all her involved adversaries: which would still not be a worldwide cataclysm. The present war in Gaza is sad enough.

If references are to the heavenly Ha'Aretz, they could be any time between 33 and the Second Advent.

If prior to 136, we believe that they most likely refer to some aspect or other of the Jewish-Roman wars. We leave that for you to ponder: but, Jewish-Roman wars or not, they most certainly only apply to some aspect of Jewish life, which is important for citizens of Asia to understand.

¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tisha_B%27Av

This means that Churchill and Stalin were greatly misled by the mistranslations of KJV and the like, and ignorantly made a decision directly opposed to God's will, when they established a new nation Israel or Ha' Aretz in 1948. If they made such a decision knowingly it is even worse: for, we ourselves have been cast into a situation of lasting conflict and war with God (Malachi 1:1-4).

Rv. 1:6 - και εποίησεν ημάς βασιλείαν¹⁹ ιερείς τω θεώ και πατρί αυτού αυτό η δόξα και το κράτος εις τους αιώνας ^T²⁰ αμήν

Rv. 1:6 - He made us a kingdom, priests to [the] God [~~and~~] His Father: to Him [be] the glory, and the might for the ages. Amen.

Having briefly indicated that Israel/Judah is about to be terminated, He now briefly indicates the sort of kingdom we will be; a kingdom of priests: our principal function is to lead the world (κόσμος) in worship. There are roughly 8 billion people in the world today; there are about 2.4 billion Christians worldwide: we still have a long way to go, we are 5.6 billion people short.

Rv. 1:7 - ιδού έρχεται μετά των νεφελών και όψεται αυτόν πας οφθαλμός και hoίτινες αυτόν εξεκένησαν και κόψονται επ αυτόν πάσαι ηαι φυλαί της γης ναι αμήν

¹⁹ Stephanus has βασιλείς, which means kings; βασιλείαν means kingdom.

²⁰ Aleph adds των αιώνω. Stephanus adds των αιώνων.

Rv. 1:7 - Look! He comes with the clouds. Every eye will see Him; [even] those who pierced Him. All the tribes of the land (της γης, Ha’Aretz) will wail over Him. Yes! Amen!

This is undeniably, Jesus. The tribes of the land (της γης, Ha’Aretz) are specifically the tribes of Israel. This is clearly a prophecy of the Second Advent of Jesus with His Father (they are both coming): unless this is about the experience of individual human death, this definitely applies to a date after 1948 AD.

Rv. 1:8 - εγώ ειμί το άλφα και το ω²¹ τ²² λέγει τ²³ κύριος ho θεός ho ων και ho ην και ho ερχόμενος ho παντοκράτωρ

Rv. 1:8 - I Am the Alpha and the Omega, says [the] Lord, [~~the~~] God; the One Being; the Now Is; the One Coming; the Almighty.

This, “ho ων και ho ην και ho ερχόμενος”, is God the Son: not God the Father. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit possess the same single essence in three hypostases.

Rv. 1:9 - εγώ ιωάννης²⁴ ho αδελφός ηυμών και συγκοινωνός εν τη θλίψει και βασιλεία και ηυπομονή εν ιησού εγενόμην εν τη νήσω τη καλουμένη πάτμω διά τον λόγον του θεού και την μαρτυρίαν ιησού

²¹ ώμεγα

²² Stephanus adds αρχη και τελος.

²³ Stephanus adds ho.

²⁴ 1885 has ιωάνης.

Rv. 1:9 - I, John, your brother, and colleague in the tribulation, kingdom, and perseverance in Jesus; was brought forth in the island [the] being called Patmos, through the Word of [the] God, the Witness of Jesus.

John calls the tribulation, which is almost always advertised as a future cataclysmic, catastrophic, global event; John claims to be enduring it: this most likely refers to the First Jewish-Roman War (66-73).

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Jewish%E2%80%93Roman_War

To be brought forth emphasizes an undeniable remembrance of Birth from Above (John 3:3, 5).

Rv. 1:10 - εγενόμην εν πνεύματι εν τη κυριακή ημέρα και ήκουσα οπίσω μου φωνήν μεγάλην ἡως σάλπιγγος

Rv. 1:10 - I was brought forth in [the] Spirit, on the Lordian Day. I heard behind me, a great voice, as of a trumpet,

In case we missed it the first time, Birth from Above (John 3:3, 5).

Trumpets don't talk; people don't ordinarily trumpet without the assistance of a σάλπιγγος, or other horn. John's strange language, employing symbolic representations, is to snap us to attention over this extraordinary scene.

Rv. 1:11 - λεγούσης ^{T25} ἡ βλέπει γράψον εἰς βιβλίον καὶ πέμψον τὰς ἑπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις ^{T26} εἰς ἔφεσον καὶ εἰς σμύρναν καὶ εἰς πέργαμον καὶ εἰς θυάτειρα καὶ εἰς σάρδεις καὶ εἰς φιλαδέλφειαν²⁷ καὶ εἰς λαοδίκειαν²⁸

Rv. 1:11 - saying, “What [~~the~~] you look at, write²⁹ in a book. Send³⁰ [it] to the seven ekklesiae: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

Look at, not just, see. John is to give careful attention to everything and record it, whether he understands it or not.

Until now, Aleph/Sinaiticus has confronted us with minor issues: now, following ἔφεσον, “καὶ εἰς πέργαμον καὶ εἰς θυάτειρα καὶ εἰς ζμύρναν καὶ εἰς φιλαδέλφεια καὶ εἰς λαοδίκειαν.” The city of σμύρναν is spelled ζμύρναν and the sequence changed; σάρδεις is missing: we can no longer explain or see how earlier explorers got from Aleph/Sinaiticus to WH. The trail to an earlier Vorlage has grown cold.

Rv. 1:12 - καὶ ^{T31} ἐπέστρεψα βλέπειν τὴν φωνὴν ἧτις ἐλάλει³² μετ' ἐμοῦ καὶ ἐπιστρέψας εἶδον ἑπτὰ λυχνίας χρυσάς;

²⁵ Stephanus adds ἐγὼ εἰμὶ τὸ ἄ καὶ τὸ ω ἡ πρότος καὶ ἡ ἔσχατος καὶ.

²⁶ Stephanus adds τὰς ἐν ἀσία.

²⁷ 1885 has φιλαδελεφείαν.

²⁸ 1885 has λαοδικείαν.

²⁹ Another troublesome aorist

³⁰ Another troublesome aorist

³¹ RP adds ἐκεῖ, there.

³² Stephanus has the aorist, rather than the imperfect.

Rv. 1:12 - I turned around to look at the voice which now talks with me. [While] turning around, I saw seven golden lampstands.

Rv. 1:13 - και εν μέσω των λυγγιών ήμοιον ηυιόν³³ ανθρώπου ενδεδυμένον ποδήρη και περιεζωσμένον προς τοις μαστοίς ζώνην χρυσάν

Rv. 1:13 - Amid the lampstands, a likeness [of the] Son of Man having clothed [Himself] to [the] foot; having been belted to the chest [with] a golden belt.

This is a direct reference to the menorah in the Tabernacle: which clarifies several things for us. The Great Menorah, the OT depiction of the Spirit of God, was always One, and always seven lamps. There is only One Spirit of God: but, He lights the lamp for every true church and every true Christian (Acts 2). Without these lights, we would never be able to see our way. Seven Spirits, seven days of creation, the completion of God's perfect leadership: this is the perfection of light.

The Table of Showbread, is a reference to the Heavenly Manna, the Επιούσιον, the Body and Blood of Jesus, that by His single effort of perfect obedience satisfies all the righteous demands of the Law for us: hence, obedience to the Law was always received by grace through faith.

The central pillar of the menorah is the risen Christ Himself. The branches are the churches or in household menorah individual believers. The flames are the Holy Spirit. There are many branches and many

³³ Stephanus, RP & Th have the dative, rather than the accusative.

flames: but only One Bride/Church and One Spirit, each multifaceted in glory. Thus, the Great Menorah shows the light of the Spirit with Christ; yet, as with a candlelight service, the light of the Great Menorah is shared with every synagogue menorah; and from thence, to every household menorah. The symbolism of the Great Menorah, comes to life in Acts 2. This is why the most important task of any star is to see that the eternal flame never goes out.

Rv. 1:14 - η δε κεφαλή αυτού και ηι τρίχες λευκαί ηως³⁴ έριον λευκόν ηως χιών και ηοι οφθαλμοί αυτού ηως φλοξ πυρός

Rv. 1:14 - Now, His head [is] also [flourishing with] white hair as white wool, as snow (Daniel 7:9; Matthew 28:3). His eyes [are] as a flame of fire.

Rv. 1:15 - και ηοι πόδες αυτού ήμοιοι χαλκολιβάνω ηως εν καμίνω πεπυρωμένης³⁵ και ηη φωνή αυτού ηως φωνή ηυδάτων πολλών

Rv. 1:15 - His feet [are] like fine bronze, as having been fired in a furnace. His voice [is] as a voice of many waters (Daniel 10:6).

Rv. 1:16 - και έχων εν τη δεξιά χειρί αυτού αστέρας ηεπτά και εκ του στόματος αυτού ηρομφαία δίστομος οξειά εκπορευομένη και ηη όψις αυτού ηως ηο ήλιος φαίνει εν τη δυνάμει αυτού

³⁴ Stephanus has as if, rather than as.

³⁵ Stephanus has the nominative plural masculine, rather than the genitive singular feminine.

Rv. 1:16 - ... having seven stars in His right hand. From His mouth a sharp two-edged sword [is] pouring forth. His face [is] as the sun (Matthew 17:2); it shines with His power.

In His hand shows his authority of control over these stars (Proverbs 21:1).

Rv. 1:17 - και ήότε είδον αυτόν έπεσα προς τους πόδας αυτού ήως νεκρός και έθηκεν³⁶ την δεξιάν αυτού ^{τ37} επ εμέ λέγων ^{τ38} μη φοβού εγώ ειμί ήο πρώτος και ήο έσχατος

Rv. 1:17 - When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. He put His right [hand] upon me, saying, “Do not fear, I Am the First and the Last;

Rv. 1:18 - και ήο ζων και εγενόμην νεκρός και ιδού ζων ειμί εις τους αιώνας των αιώνων ^{τ39} και έχω τας κλεις του θανάτου και του ήάδου

Rv. 1:18 - the Living One. I was brought forth [from] decay⁴⁰. Look! I am the Living One into the ages of the ages. I have the keys to [~~the~~] Thanatos and [~~the~~] Hades.”

³⁶ Stephanus adds the prefix επί to the base word.

³⁷ Stephanus adds χείρα.

³⁸ Stephanus adds μοι.

³⁹ Stephanus & RP add αμήν.

⁴⁰ Jesus was raised from the dead before necrosis could set in.

Rv. 1:19 - γράψον ουν há είδες και há εισίν και há μέλλει γίνεσθαι⁴¹
μετά ταύτα

Rv. 1:19 - So, write what you saw; [things] which are; and what is about to be brought forth with these [things].

Rv. 1:20 - το μυστήριον των ηεπτά αστέρων ηούς⁴² είδες επί της δεξιάς μου και τας ηεπτά λυχνίας τας χρυσάς ηοι ηεπτά αστέρες άγγελοι των ηεπτά εκκλησιών εισίν και ηαι λυχνίαι ηαι ηεπτά⁴³, ^τ⁴⁴ ηεπτά εκκλησίαι εισίν

Rv. 1:20 - The mystery of the seven stars, which you saw at My right; [with] the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are [the] messengers of the seven ekklesiae. The seven lampstands are [the] seven ekklesiae.

The seven stars, together with the Moon and the Sun, follow the pattern of Joseph's dream (Genesis 37:9). The stars are a metaphor, trope, or type of Israelite leadership down through the ages: this is appropriately applied to synagogue leadership. Moses first asked God for assistance in His work after 1406 BC. God granted Moses seventy-two spirit empowered presbyters, who would give their lives to the study, teaching, and application of Torah (Numbers 11:24-29). These were the first Sanhedrin, even though, by the time of Nicodemus (circa 30 AD), they had misplaced the Spirit (John 3:1-16). Together with the tribal heads,

⁴¹ TH has γενέσθαι, the aorist, rather than the present.

⁴² Stephanus has the genitive, rather than the accusative.

⁴³ Stephanus has the first attributive position, rather than the second.

⁴⁴ Stephanus adds háς είδες.

and prophets, they formed the leadership of Israel, before the kingdom was established.

The seven stars are not the flames of the Spirit. The seven stars are either the rulers of the synagogues or the bishops of the churches or both, depending on the timing and reality of their own conversion. Because this is the living menorah of God: these are not the pagan civil governors of these cities. The chief duty of a synagogue ruler or church bishop is to see that the eternal flame never goes out: thus, these stars are the primary attendants of their menorah's, each a type of The Great Menorah.

Since, there is little evidence that Christianity was anything more than seven starting missions at this time: the ekklesiae are not the city ekklesiae. Rather, they are organized as towns or tribes within each city. So, these stars are supposed to be the Spirit filled, led, and powered human leadership of the seven ekklesiae, their Bishops, after their conversion; or the rulers of the synagogues before their conversion.

They are not angels (spirit beings): for, why would holy angels ever sin? They are not, presbyters: for presbyteral responsibility begins and ends with studying and teaching the Word and words of God. They are responsible for protecting the Christian ekklesia from all enemies within and without. How are they to accomplish this task? By holding high the light of God's Holy Spirit, the source of their power. Some of them have sufficient power: but, have failed to varying degrees at their God assigned task. Others are too weak, or lead a weak ekklesia: so, they must endure persecution and martyrdom. But, some with power, even tolerate houses of prostitution in their towns....

On the other hand, wealthy Jewish businessmen always had inside contacts with temporal powers. There is even a small chance that the

Governor himself was a Jew. What is difficult to grasp here, is how Jesus will hold this Governor or Bishop accountable, if he has no authority over the wrongful actions involved.

Note the format: one town, one church, one Bishop. This will not change until Constantine.

Timeline

Attempting to construct a timeline encompassing all seven churches of Asia has proved daunting. We do not have absolute, complete, and comprehensive archaeological knowledge or historical reporting: all reports are not written from the same perspective.

Some of these cities trace their rise to prominence to 1000 BC, or possibly earlier; which is about the time of David (1010-970 BC), and Solomon (970-930 BC). Such cities can easily have undiscovered existences from the Stone, Neolithic, Chalcolithic (Copper), Bronze, and Iron ages. Minimalists⁴⁵ generally deny any historicity to these ages.

The rise of a city to prominence is about money. The east-west traffic in consumer goods, later, sometimes called the Silk Road⁴⁶, was multiple systems of roads extending from China, possibly even Japan, to Spain.

⁴⁵ Minimalists, in this sense, deny the historicity of anything prior to the divided kingdom (930), calling it prehistoric. They also tend to prefer later dates, over earlier dates: so, if 900 +/- 50 is hypothetically possible from carbon dating, they tend to prefer the 850 date.

⁴⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silk_Road

The north-south traffic, including the Via Maris (way of the sea)⁴⁷ extended from Egypt and farther south, to Anatolia and northward. The intersections of these transportation systems were important locations for taxation and trade: which explains why great political powers vied for their control. Because sea navigation was still somewhat primitive, it would appear that most navigators hugged the shore: still, transportation by boat is always more efficient than transportation by land.

Early traffic in copper came from Cyprus; Solomon is reported to have brought his silver from mines in Spain and/or Sardinia; iron was transported by land from India⁴⁸. The sale, and technological development of these and other metals determined the advance and prominence of city development. A copper weapon quickly overcame one of wood and stone. A bronze weapon usually bested a copper one. Iron development and monopoly partially explains the early dominance of Philistia over Israel. Everybody knows the fame of Damascus Steel⁴⁹. When my sword can cut your sword in half with a single blow or two, I tend to dominate you. When my bow can outshoot your bow by hundreds of yards, with greater accuracy, propelling heavier arrows, with greater target penetration, I tend to dominate you.

Many other materials and technologies were of great importance, as well: dyes, linen, papyrus, parchment⁵⁰, and of course, luxury items like gems, gold, ivory, pearls, and more.

⁴⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Via_Maris

⁴⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_metallurgy_in_the_Indian_subcontinent

⁴⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Damascus_steel

⁵⁰ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parchment>

Marketing of such items required loading and unloading them, from ships onto docks, thence to land based customers: so, a city by the sea, with a functioning port, partially explains that city's prosperity.

Another early and universal motive seems to be finding a nice place to locate a palace: security, and view were all important. Elevation provides strategic oversight, which is important for control, dominance, and management, as well as the ability to see adversaries coming, and repel their advance... it's much easier to fight going downhill than going uphill.

There are other factors: principally wisdom. Control of banking, communication, entertainment, and transportation media provides distinctive advantages without war. Because of Solomon's early alliances with Phoenicia, Israelite sailors rapidly learned mastery of the sea, so necessary for moving silver from Spain to Judea; thus, establishing Israelite colonies (with banking, entertainment, synagogues, and more) in every major seaport in the Mediterranean, and possibly beyond, up the western coasts of Europe and Africa.

So, Israel was conquered by Assyria (722 BC); Judah was conquered by Babylon (586 BC); Babylon was conquered by Medo-Persia (aka Achaemenid Empire). Under Croesus (585-546 BC)⁵¹ Lydia controlled most of western Anatolia, until defeated by Persia (547 BC)⁵², by 539 BC Persia had conquered Babylon⁵³: so. eight years before the conquest of Babylon, Persia was already in political control of the seven-cities:

⁵¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Croesus>

⁵² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Thymbra

⁵³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Opis

we do not know to what extent that victory affected daily lives in Asia, battle continuing until circa 540 BC and possibly beyond.

The Greeks were not delinquent in retaliation (499-449 BC). The Persians were finally defeated, after heavy losses in earlier Ionian battles⁵⁴, at the battle of Marathon (490 BC)⁵⁵. In a second Persian invasion the Greeks were defeated at the battle of Thermopylae (480 BC)⁵⁶, but won the naval battle for Artemisium mostly because of providential storms: the invasion ended with a Greek victory at Plataea (479 BC)⁵⁷. The situation quieted into an uncomfortable Greek-Persian peace. Between 336 and 323 BC, the Macedonians under Alexander conquered Persia⁵⁸, thus ending over two hundred years of Greek-Persian strife: but, leaving an unstable Macedonian government. At Alexander's death, the wars of the Diadochi (312 BC)⁵⁹ ultimately resulted in the establishment of the Ptolemies in Egypt (305 BC-79 AD)⁶⁰ and the Seleucids in Syria (305-63 BC)⁶¹.

The Kingdom of Pergamon (282-129 BC)⁶², which controlled most of western Anatolia, wrested eventual independence from the Seleucids. In 133 BC, King Attalus III died without heir, and in his will left

⁵⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ionian_Revolt

⁵⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Marathon

⁵⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Thermopylae

⁵⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Plataea

⁵⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wars_of_Alexander_the_Great

⁵⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wars_of_the_Diadochi

⁶⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ptolemaic_Kingdom

⁶¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seleucid_Empire

⁶² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Pergamon

Pergamum to Rome⁶³; somewhat reluctantly, but not immediately afterward the Roman province of Asia the most prestigious senatorial province, governed by a proconsul was formed: it continued until 293 AD⁶⁴.

Ephesus, existing as a city from circa 1000 BC, was one of twelve cities in the Ionian League⁶⁵ (Ionia⁶⁶); the Ionians are one of four ancient Greek cultures; the city was abandoned circa 1500 AD.

Old Smyrna existed from circa 1100 BC. New Smyrna was established around 400 BC. Smyrna (Izmir)⁶⁷ is one of the cities in the Aeolis Dodecapolis⁶⁸: the Aeolians are a second of the ancient Greek cultures⁶⁹; Izmir continues today⁷⁰. Because its harbor did not silt over, Smyrna continued to grow in prominence. Circa 195 BC ties were broken with Pergamum and established with Rome. The city was plagued by an earthquake in the 178 AD. Ignatius, Polycarp, and Irenaeus would all be involved there.

⁶³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attalus_III

⁶⁴ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asia_\(Roman_province\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asia_(Roman_province))

⁶⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ionian_League

⁶⁶ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ionia>

⁶⁷ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smyrna>

⁶⁸ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aeolis>

⁶⁹ The other ancient Greek cultures, according to Herodotus, are the Achaeans and Dorians: but, this is obscure. Except for Achaea, each had a separate dialect.

⁷⁰ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C4%B0zmir>

Pergamum⁷¹ (Pergamon⁷²) may have been established around 800 BC; although classified as a Greek culture, we suspect from its geography, was also Lydian, Hittite, and possibly others. It was, according to Pliny the Elder (79 AD) the most important city in the province. According to tradition Saint Antipas (92 AD), who was ordained bishop by John, was burned alive there. Trajan (117 AD) conducted a comprehensive redesign. Its several temples indicate a likely predominance of pagan worship. It was destroyed around 1113 AD; but, rebuilt by Komnenos around 1170 AD; it fell to ruins sometime after 1300 AD: yet, exists as nearby Bergama today.⁷³

Thyatira⁷⁴ (previously Pelopia and/or Semiramis) renamed Thyateira (from daughter) in 290 BC; was possibly a combination of Lydian, Mysian⁷⁵, Phrygian⁷⁶, and other cultures; may have been visited by Paul

⁷¹ The city.

⁷² The kingdom.

⁷³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pergamon>

⁷⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thyatira>

⁷⁵ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mysia>

⁷⁶ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phrygia>

and Silas (Acts 16:11-40)⁷⁷ who stayed with Lydia⁷⁸. The Orthodox population was deported in 1922 AD. Today it is called Akhisar⁷⁹.

Sardis, once the capital of the Lydian⁸⁰ Empire, was founded circa 1500 BC; reached major city status by 600 BC; sacked by Cyrus around 547 BC; it was rebuilt as a Persian city; conquered by Alexander around 334 BC; passed to the Romans in 129 BC; suffered an earthquake in 17 AD; in 295 AD it was the seat of the metropolitan of Lydia; abandoned circa 1402 AD; two hamlets survived; it is associated with Sart today.⁸¹

Philadelphia (Alaşehir), probably of Lydian culture, was founded by Eumenes II (189 BC); he “named the city for the love of his brother, who would be his successor, Attalus II”, it was part of the estate that Attalus III bequeathed to Rome (133 BC); circa 1922 AD, the city burned⁸².

⁷⁷ This is unlikely. A more plausible scenario is that Thyatira is Lydia’s hometown; she has long since moved to Philippi, where she established her business and home; here in Philippi she meets with Paul and Silas. Neither they, nor she, were ever necessarily connected to the work in Thyatira.

⁷⁸ The fact that the person Lydia retains the name of both city and culture, reveals its lasting importance.

⁷⁹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akhisar>

⁸⁰ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lydia>

⁸¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sardis>

⁸² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metropolis_of_Philadelphia

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ala%C5%9Fehir>

Laodicea, founded by Antiochus II Theos, in honor of his wife, Laodice, around 261-253 BC, is thought to stem from Carian and/or Lydian culture; Antiochus III, had transported 2000 Jewish families to the area (213 BC); destroyed by earthquake (60 AD); rebuilt, the city was finally destroyed sometime after 1450⁸³.

Rome created the Province of Asia in 129 BC, by combining Pergamon, with Ionia, and Aeolia (?)⁸⁴. Thus, the seven cities are an amalgamation of a wide variety of cultures and languages.

As far as we know alphabetic languages did not develop until relatively late: Minoan Linear A (1800 BC)⁸⁵, Linear B (1400 BC)⁸⁶, which are not truly alphabetic languages. We cannot distinguish between Phoenician⁸⁷, proto-Canaanite⁸⁸, and paleo-Hebrew⁸⁹ alphabets, except for the differing bodies of literature they comprise; although older claims of origins exist, I'm not aware of any actual artifacts prior to a

⁸³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laodicea_on_the_Lycus

⁸⁴ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asia_\(Roman_province\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asia_(Roman_province))

⁸⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linear_A

⁸⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linear_B

⁸⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenician_language

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenician_alphabet#:~:text=The%20Phoenician%20alphabet%20is%20an,found%20across%20the%20Mediterranean%20region.

⁸⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Canaanite_alphabet

⁸⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paleo-Hebrew_alphabet

Paleo-Hebrew is the language of David, Solomon, Israel until 722, Judea until 586, Isaiah called it the Lip of Canaan (Isaiah 19:18).

1200-1000 BC⁹⁰ abjad. The origin of Greek, whether Minoan or Phoenician is disputed. Nevertheless, the development of the Greco-Roman culture was greatly influenced by the development of this Language, which, in many ways, served to unify this civilization. The Roman elite kept and promoted the Greek language and culture.

By 930 BC the Israelites were already establishing communities and Synagogues in Ionian and other western cities: they were already mixing with Greek and other cultures and languages. By 586 BC the paleo-Hebrew language was beginning to transition to Square Text Aramaic, the language of Babylon. By 516 BC Square Text Aramaic was the language of the Jews. By 323 BC the Greeks had overcome Assyrian/Babylonian/Medo-Persian civilization. By 200 BC Greek was the official legal language of Judea. By the death of Christ in 33 AD, there were already Greek speaking Judean cultures all over the Mediterranean. By Pentecost 33 AD many of these various cultures had heard their own dialect of Greek spoken in Jerusalem (Acts 2:7-8). Within two decades the Gospel had already spread to the synagogues of the Roman Province of Asia and beyond. Some synagogues received the Gospel; others rejected it; still others could not tolerate the clash of Greek and Jewish cultures; this tended to develop four different kinds of Synagogues: Jewish Judaism only, Christian Jewish exclusively, Christian Gentile exclusively, Christian Jewish and Gentile cooperatively. We cannot be sure, which of these the ekklesiae Asia minor represent.

⁹⁰ As of 2005 the Tel Zayit abjad was the oldest known artifact of this kind. Contrary claims would necessarily be based on later finds and would require careful certification.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zayit_Stone

The Ptolemies and Seleucids continued fighting, frequently in Israel/Judaea and often enough over the control of Israel/Judaea. Israelites tended to favor the Ptolemies over the Seleucids. Earlier rivalry between Greco-Romans and Persians had already split Christianity, ostensibly over Nestorianism (431 AD)⁹¹. Long after Roman dominance of both, the Ptolemy/Seleucid rivalry continued to infect Christian theology; developed into competing seats of learning; and would ultimately split Christianity at Chalcedon (451 AD): driving away the Copts and other non-Chalcedonians. Justinian I (circa 538 AD) would turn it into Roman law, oppressing all who disagreed⁹². By 1054 AD the Romans and Greeks would split until this very day. The Council of Florence (1431-1449 AD)⁹³ clinched the nails. Hus (1415) and Protestantism (1517) would produce more fractures: in all 45,000 denominations, worldwide today.

The seven ekklesiae of Asia: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, must somehow fit into this cultural and linguistic conglomeration.

Revelation 2

Rv. 2:1 - τω ἀγγέλῳ τῷ ἐν ἐφέσῳ ἐκκλησίας γράψον τάδε λέγει ὁ κρατῶν τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἀστέρας ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ ὁ περιπατῶν ἐν μέσῳ τῶν ἑπτὰ λυχνιῶν τῶν χρυσῶν

⁹¹ <https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nestorianism#:~:text=Nestorianism>

⁹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justinian_I

⁹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_Florence

Rv. 2:1 - Write to the messenger of the ekklesia⁹⁴ in Ephesus. The One Exercising Might [over] the seven stars in His right [hand], the One Walking About amid the seven golden lampstands says this,

Rv. 2:2 - οίδα τα έργα σου και τον κόπον και την ηυπομονήν σου και ήότι ου δύνη βαστάσαι κακούς και επείρασας τους λέγοντας ήεαυτούς αποστόλους και ουκ εισίν και ήεύρες αυτούς ψευδείς

Rv. 2:2 - “I have known your works, the labor, your perseverance: that, you are unable to endure corruption. You tried those saying they [were] Apostles: and, are not. You found them [to be] false.

Rv. 2:3 - και ηυπομονήν ήχεις και εβάστασας διά το όνομα μου και ου κεκοπίακες

Rv. 2:3 - You have perseverance; you endured through My name: not having tired.

Rv. 2:4 - αλλά ήχω κατά σου ήότι την αγάπην σου την πρώτην αφήκες

Rv. 2:4 - But, I have [this] against you; that, you denied your first love:

⁹⁴ Ekklesia/ekklesiae means called out. We cannot overstress this meaning. You are the called out or you are being called out. You are a soldier for Christ. Report for duty.

Rv. 2:5 - μνημόνευε ουν πόθεν πέπτωκας⁹⁵ και μετανόησον και τα πρώτα έργα ποιήσον ει δε μη έρχομαι σοι και κινήσω την λυχνίαν σου εκ του τόπου αυτής εάν μη μετανοήσης

Rv. 2:5 - so, remember whence you have fallen. Repent. Do the first works. Yet, if not, I come to you. I will move your lampstand from her place, if you would not repent.

Rv. 2:6 - αλλά τούτο έχεις ήότι μισείς τα έργα των νικολαϊτών ήά καγώ μισώ

Rv. 2:6 - But, you have this; since, you hate the works of the Overcomers, which I also hate.”

Rv. 2:7 - ήό έχων ους ακουσάτω τι το πνεύμα λέγει ταις εκκλησίαις τω νικώντι δώσω αυτό φαγείν εκ του ξύλου της ζωής ήό εστίν εν τω παραδείσω του θεού

Rv. 2:7 - Those having an ear, let them hear what the Spirit tells the ekklesiae, “I will give to those overcoming, to eat from the Tree of Life, which is in the Paradise of God.”

Rv. 2:8 - και τω αγγέλω τω εν σμύρνη εκκλησίας γράψον τάδε λέγει ήό πρώτος και ήό έσχατος ήός εγένετο νεκρός και έζησεν

⁹⁵ 1885 has πέπτωκες.

Rv. 2:8 - Write to the messenger of the ekklesia in Smyrna. The First and the Last, Who, was brought forth [from] decay⁹⁶ and lived, says this,

Rv. 2:9 - οίδα' σου την θλίψιν και την πτωχείαν αλλά πλούσιος ει και την βλασφημίαν εκ των λεγόντων ιουδαίους είναι ηεαυτούς και ουκ εισίν αλλά συναγωγή του σατανά

Rv. 2:9 - "I have known your tribulation, and poverty: but, you are wealthy; the blasphemy of those claiming to be Jews themselves, are not, but, [are] a synagogue of Satan.

Rv. 2:10 - μη φοβού ή μέλλεις πάσχειν ιδού μέλλει βάλλειν ή διάβολος εξ ήυμών εις φυλακήν ήνα πειρασθήτε και ήέχητε⁹⁷ θλίψιν ήμερών δέκα γίνου πιστός άχρι θανάτου και δώσω σοι τον στέφανον της ζωής

Rv. 2:10 - Fear none [of the things] which you are about to suffer. Look! The Devil is about to throw [some] of you into prison, so that you would be imperiled. You will have a tribulation of ten days. Be brought forth faithful until death. I will give you the wreath of life."

Rv. 2:11 - ή έχων ους ακουσάτω τι το πνεύμα λέγει ταις εκκλησίαις ή νικών ου μη αδικηθή εκ του θανάτου του δευτέρου

⁹⁶ Jesus was raised from the dead before necrosis could set in.

⁹⁷ 1885 prefers έχητε.

Rv. 2:11 - Those having an ear, let them hear what the Spirit tells the ekklesiae, “Those overcoming, could never, ever be wronged by the second death.”

Rv. 2:12 - και τω αγγέλω της εν περγάμω εκκλησίας γράψον τάδε λέγει
ho έχων την ηρομφαίαν την δίστομον την οξείαν

Rv. 2:12 - Write to the messenger of the ekklesia in Pergamum. The One having a sharp two-edged sword says this,

Rv. 2:13 - οίδα που κατοικείς ήπου ho θρόνος του σατανά και κρατείς
το όνομα μου και ουκ ηρνήσω την πίστιν μου και εν ταις ημέραις
αντιπάς⁹⁸ ho μάρτυς μου ho πιστός [μου] hos απεκτάνθη παρ ηυμίν
ήπου ho σατανάς κατοικεί

Rv. 2:13 - “I have known where you live, where Satan’s throne [is]. You support My Name. You did not deny My faith in the days of Antipas, My faithful witness, who was put to death among you, where Satan dwells.

Rv. 2:14 - αλλ έχω κατά σου ολίγα ήτι έχεις εκεί κρατούντας την
διδαχήν βαλαάμ hos edidasken τω βαλάκ βαλείν σκάνδαλον ενώπιον
των ηυιών ισραήλ φαγείν ειδωλόθυτα και πορνεύσαι

Rv. 2:14 - But I have a few [things] against you; since, you have there, those supporting the teaching of Balaam, who now teaches Balak to throw a snare before the children of Israel: to eat idol sacrifices, and to commit fornication.

⁹⁸ 1885 has αντίπας.

Rv. 2:15 - οὕτως ἔχεις και συ κρατοῦντας την διδαχὴν νικολαϊτῶν
ὁμοίως

Rv. 2:15 - Thus, you also have those supporting the doctrine of
Overcomers as well.

Rv. 2:16 - μετανόησον οὖν εἰ δε μη ἔρχομαι' σοι ταχύ και πολεμήσω μετ
αυτῶν εν τη ἡρομφαία του στόματος μου

Rv. 2:16 - Therefore, repent! Yet, if [you do] not, I come to you
quickly. I will war with them with the sword of My mouth.”

Rv. 2:17 - ὁ ἔχων οὖς ακουσάτω τι το πνεῦμα λέγει ταις εκκλησίαις τω
νικῶντι δώσω αυτώ του μάννα του κεκρυμμένου και δώσω αυτώ ψήφον
λευκήν και επί την ψήφον ὄνομα καινόν γεγραμμένον ὃ ουδεὶς οἶδεν εἰ
μη ὃ λαμβάνων

Rv. 2:17 - Those having an ear, let them hear what the Spirit tells the
ekklesiae, “I will give to those overcoming, of the manna, having been
hidden. I will give them a white stone; upon the stone a new name,
having been written, which no one has known except those receiving
[it].”

Rv. 2:18 - και τω αγγέλω τω εν θυατείροις εκκλησίας γράψον τάδε λέγει
ho υιός του θεού ho έχων τους οφθαλμούς αυτού⁹⁹ ηως φλόγα πυρός
και hoi πόδες αυτού ήμοιοι χαλκολιβάνω

Rv. 2:18 - Write to the messenger of the ekklesia in Thyatira. The Son
of God, the One Having His eyes as flaming fire; His feet like fine
bronze, says this,

Rv. 2:19 - οίδα' σου τα έργα και την αγάπην και την πίστιν και την
διακονίαν και την ηυπομονήν σου και τα έργα σου τα έσχατα πλείονα
των πρώτων

Rv. 2:19 - "I have known of you: your works, love, faith, service, and
perseverance. Your last works [are] greater than the first.

Rv. 2:20 - αλλά έχω κατά σου ήότι αφείς την γυναίκα ιεζάβελ ηη
λέγουσα ηεαυτήν προφήτιν και διδάσκει και πλανά τους εμούς δούλους
πορνεύσαι και φαγείν ειδωλόθυτα

Rv. 2:20 - But, I have [this] against you: since, you release the woman
Jezebel, the one calling herself a prophet. She teaches and deceives My
servants to commit fornication and to eat idol sacrifices.

Rv. 2:21 - και έδωκα αυτή χρόνον ήίνα μετανοήση και ου θέλει
μετανοήσαι εκ της πορνείας αυτής

⁹⁹ The uncertainty brackets were removed because confirmation was
found at RP, SBL & TH.

Rv. 2:21 - I gave her time, so that she would repent. She did not wish to repent of her fornication.

Rv. 2:22 - ιδού βάλλω αυτήν εις κλίνην και τους μοιχεύοντας μετ αυτής εις θλίψιν μεγάλην εάν μη μετανοήσουσιν εκ των έργων αυτής

Rv. 2:22 - Look! I throw her into a bed; and those [who] will be committing fornication with her into great tribulation, unless they will repent of her works.

Rv. 2:23 - και τα τέκνα αυτής αποκτενώ εν θανάτω και γνώσονται πάσαι ηαι εκκλησΐαι ήότι εγώ ειμί ho εραυνών νεφρούς και καρδΐας και δώσω ηυμΐν ηεκάστω κατά τα έργα ηυμών

Rv. 2:23 - I will kill her children by Thanatos. The ekklesiae will all know; since, I Am the One Searching minds and hearts. I will give to you each according to your works.”

Rv. 2:24 - ηυμΐν δε λέγω τοις λοιποΐς τοις εν θυατείροις ήόσοι ουκ έχουσιν την διδαχήν ταύτην ηοΐτινες ουκ έγνωσαν τα βαθέα του σατανά ηως λέγουσιν ου βάλλω εφ ηυμάς άλλο βάρος

Rv. 2:24 - Yet, I tell the rest of you in Thyatira, as many as do not have this teaching, whoever did not know the depths of Satan. As they are saying, I do not throw upon you another burden.

Rv. 2:25 - πλην ho έχετε κρατήσατε άχρις ηου αν ήήξω

Rv. 2:25 - Otherwise, whatever you have, control until whenever I would arrive.

Rv. 2:26 - και ho νικών και ho τηρών άχρι τέλους τα έργα μου δώσω αυτό εξουσίαν επί των εθνών

Rv. 2:26 - Those overcoming; those guarding My works until [the] end: I will give them authority over the nations.

Rv. 2:27 - και ποιμανεί αυτούς εν ηράβδω σιδηρά ηως τα σκεύη τα κεραμικά συντρίβεται ηως καγώ είληφα παρά του πατρός μου

Rv. 2:27 - They will shepherd them, with a rod of iron; they are broken as the potter's vessel.

Rv. 2:28 - και δώσω αυτό τον αστέρα τον πρωϊνόν

Rv. 2:28 - As I also have received from My Father. I will give them the dawn star.

Rv. 2:29 - ho έχων ους ακουσάτω τι το πνεύμα λέγει ταις εκκλησίαις

Rv. 2:29 - Those having an ear, let them hear what the Spirit tells the ekklesiae.

Revelation 3

Rv. 3:1 - και τω αγγέλω της εν σάρδεσιν εκκλησίας γράψον τάδε λέγει ho έχων τα ηεπτά πνεύματα του θεού και τους ηεπτά αστέρας οίδα σου τα έργα ήότι όνομα έχεις ήότι ζης και νεκρός ει

Rv. 3:1 - Write to the messenger of the ekklesia in Sardis. The One Having the Seven Spirits of God, and the Seven Stars says this, "I have known your works; since you have a reputation, that you live. You are dead.

Rv. 3:2 - γίνου γρηγορών και στήρισον τα λοιπά ήά έμελλον αποθανείν ου γαρ ηεύρηκα' σου έργα πεπληρωμένα ενώπιον του θεού μου

Rv. 3:2 - Be brought forth awaking. Stabilize the rest, which are now about to die: for, I have not found your works having been completed before My God.

Rv. 3:3 - μνημόνευε ουν πως είληφας και ήκουσας και τήρει και μετανόησον εάν ουν μη γρηγορήσης ήήξω ηως κλέπτης και ου μη γνωσ ποιαν ήώραν ήήξω επί σε

Rv. 3:3 - So, remember how you have received, and heard. Guard! Repent! So, if you would not be awakened, I will come as a thief. You would never, ever know what hour I will come upon you."

Rv. 3:4 - αλλά έχεις ολίγα ονόματα εν σάρδεσιν ήά ουκ εμόλυναν τα ηιμάτια αυτών και περιπατήσουσιν μετ εμού εν λευκοίς ήότι άξιοί' εισίν

Rv. 3:4 - But, you have a few names in Sardis, who did not defile their garments. They will walk with me in white: since, they are worthy."

Rv. 3:5 - ho νικών ηούτως περιβαλείται εν ηιματίοις λευκοίς και ου μη εξαλείψω το όνομα αυτου εκ της βίβλου της ζωής και ηομολογήσω το όνομα αυτου ενώπιον του πατρός μου και ενώπιον των αγγέλων αυτου

Rv. 3:5 - Thus, those overcoming, will be wrapped in white garments. I will never, ever erase their names from the Book of Life. I will confess their names before My Father, and before His messengers.

Rv. 3:6 - ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τι τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις

Rv. 3:6 - Those having an ear, let them hear what the Spirit tells the ekklesiae.

Rv. 3:7 - καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν φιλαδελφείᾳ ἐκκλησίας γράψον τάδε λέγει ὁ ἅγιος ὁ ἀληθινὸς ὁ ἔχων τὴν κλεῖν δαυὶδ ὁ ἀνοίγων καὶ οὐδεὶς κλείσει καὶ κλείων καὶ οὐδεὶς ἀνοίγει

Rv. 3:7 - Write to the messenger of the ekklesia in Philadelphia. The Holy, the True, the One Having the Key of David, the One Opening, and no one will lock, the One Locking, and no one opens, says this,

Rv. 3:8 - οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα ἰδοὺ δέδωκα ἐνώπιόν σου θύραν ἠνεωγμένην ἣν οὐδεὶς δύναται κλείσαι αὐτήν ὅτι μικρὰν ἔχεις δύναμιν καὶ ἐτήρησας μου τὸν λόγον καὶ οὐκ ἠρνήσω τὸ ὄνομά μου

Rv. 3:8 - “I have known your works. Look! I have given before you, a door, having been opened, which no one has power to lock [ἡ]; since, you have little power: you guarded My word; you did not deny My name.

Rv. 3:9 - ἰδοὺ δίδω ἐκ τῆς συναγωγῆς τοῦ σατανᾶ τῶν λεγόντων ἑαυτοὺς ἰουδαίους εἶναι καὶ οὐκ εἰσὶν ἀλλὰ ψεύδονται ἰδοὺ ποιήσω αὐτοὺς ἵνα ἠήξουσιν καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν ἐνώπιον τῶν ποδῶν σου καὶ γνώσιν ὅτι ἐγὼ ἠγάπησα σε

Rv. 3:9 - Look! I would give [those] from the synagogue of Satan, those saying themselves to be Jews: they are not; but, they lie. Look! I will make them, so that they will come: they will prostrate before your feet. They would know that I loved you.

Rv. 3:10 - ἵνα ἐτήρησας τὸν λόγον τῆς ὑπομονῆς μου καὶ ἐγὼ σε τηρήσω ἐκ τῆς ὥρας τοῦ πειρασμοῦ τῆς μελλούσης ἐρχεσθαι ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκουμένης ὅλης πειράσαι τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς

Rv. 3:10 - Since, you guarded the word of My perseverance; I also will guard you from the hour of the impending peril, to come upon the whole habitation to imperil those inhabiting [~~εἰς~~] the land (τῆς γῆς, Ha' Aretz).

Rv. 3:11 - ἐρχομαι ταχύ κράτει ἃ ἔχεις ἵνα μηδεὶς λάβῃ τὸν στέφανον σου

Rv. 3:11 - I come quickly. Strengthen what you have, so that no one would take your wreath.”

Rv. 3:12 - ἃ νικῶν ποιήσω αὐτὸν στήλον ἐν τῷ ναῷ τοῦ θεοῦ μου καὶ ἔξω οὐ μὴ ἐξέλθῃ ἐτι καὶ γράψω ἐπ' αὐτὸν τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ μου καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς πόλεως τοῦ θεοῦ μου τῆς καινῆς ἱερουσαλήμ ἣ κατεβαίνουσα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ μου καὶ τὸ ὄνομα μου τὸ καινόν

Rv. 3:12 - Those overcoming, I will make them a stela in the temple of My God. They would never, ever come outside [ever] again. I will write on them the Name of My God; and the name of the city of My

God, the New Jerusalem, coming down from the heaven from My God; and My New Name.

Rv. 3:13 - ho éχων ους ακουσάτω τι το πνεύμα λέγει ταις εκκλησίαις

Rv. 3:13 - Those having an ear, let them hear what the Spirit tells the ekklesiae.

Rv. 3:14 - και τω αγγέλω της εν λαοδικεία εκκλησίας γράψον τάδε λέγει ho αμίν ho μάρτυς ho πιστός και [ho] αληθινός η αρχή της κτίσεως του θεού

Rv. 3:14 - Write to the messenger of the ekklesia in Laodicea. The Amen, the Witness, the Faithful, the True, the Architect of [the] God's Creation says this,

Rv. 3:15 - οίδα' σου τα έργα ήτι ούτε ψυχρός ει ούτε ζεστός όφελον ψυχρός ης η ζεστός

Rv. 3:15 - "I have known your works; since, you are neither sweet, nor spicy. If only you are now sweet or spicy.

Rv. 3:16 - ηούτως ήτι χλιαρός ει και ούτε ζεστός ούτε ψυχρός μέλλω σε εμέσαι εκ του στόματος' μου

Rv. 3:16 - Thus: since, you are bland; neither spicy nor sweet, I am about to spit you from my mouth.

Rv. 3:17 - ἵνα λέγεις ἵνα πλούσιος εἰμί και πεπλούτηκα και ουδέν χρείαν ἔχω και ουκ οἶδας ἵνα συ ει ho ταλαίπωρος και ελεεινός¹⁰⁰ και πτωχός και τυφλός και γυμνός

Rv. 3:17 - Since, you say, ‘Since, I am wealthy; I have been filled; I have need of nothing.’ You have known not: since, you are wretched, without mercy, poverty stricken, senseless, and naked.

Rv. 3:18 - συμβουλεύω σοι αγοράσαι παρ εμού χρυσίον πεπυρωμένον εκ πυρός ἵνα πλουτήσης και ἡμάτια λευκά ἵνα περιβάλῃ και μη φανερωθῇ ἡ αἰσχύνῃ της γυμνότητος σου και κολούριον εγχρίσαι τους οφθαλμούς σου ἵνα βλέπῃς

Rv. 3:18 - I challenge you to buy from me gold, having been purified by fire, that you would be wealthy; white garments, that you would wrap around [yourself], [that] the shame of your nakedness would not be brought to light; and eye wash to anoint your eyes, that you could see.

Rv. 3:19 - ἐγώ ἵσους εἰν φιλό ἐλέγχω και παιδεύω ζήλευε ουν και μετανόησον

Rv. 3:19 - As many, if I love, I rebuke, and discipline. Therefore, be determined and repent.”

Rv. 3:20 - ἰδοὺ ἤστηκα ἐπὶ την θύραν και κρούω εἰν τις ακούσῃ της φωνῆς μου και ανοίξῃ την θύραν εἰσελεύσομαι προς αὐτόν και δειπνήσω μετ αὐτοῦ και αὐτός μετ εμού

¹⁰⁰ 1885 has ελεεινός.

Rv. 3:20 - Look! I have stood at the door, and I knock. If anyone would hear My voice and would open the door; I will come in to them. I will dine with them and they with Me.”

Rv. 3:21 - ho νικών δώσω αυτώ καθίσαι μετ εμού εν τω θρόνω μου ἡως καγώ ενίκησα και εκάθισα μετά του πατρός μου εν τω θρόνω αυτού

Rv. 3:21 - Those overcoming, I will give to them to sit with Me in My throne: as I also overcame, I sat with My Father in His throne.

Rv. 3:22 - ho έχων ους ακουσάτω τι το πνεύμα λέγει ταις εκκλησίαις

Rv. 3:22 - Those having an ear, let them hear what the Spirit tells the ekklesiae.

The Ekklesiae of Asia

In order to better understand the Ekklesiae of Asia, we have attempted to unfold the contents of Chapters 2 and 3, with their comments, by subject matter. Our apologies for any words that may have been lost or used twice in this somewhat difficult process.

The Address

We suspect that the τω/της switch, τω αγγέλω τω/της εν ... εκκλησίας γράψον, is a trivial scribal error, unresolvable at this time: τω in Rv. 2:1, 8, and 18; της in Rv. 2:12; 3:1, 7, and 14.

The addresses to the messengers of the seven ekklesiae are similar, each taking the format, “Write to the messenger of the ekklesia in/of ...:

- † Rv. 2:1, Ephesus;
- † Rv. 2:8, Smyrna;
- † Rv. 2:12, Pergamum;
- † Rv. 2:18, Thyatira;
- † Rv. 3:1, Sardis;
- † Rv. 3:7, Philadelphia;
- † Rv. 3:14, Laodicea.”

Jesus' Nature

The introductions of Jesus are also similar,

“τάδε λέγει ho:

- † Rv. 2:1, κρατών τους heπτά αστέρας εν τη δεξιά αυτού ho περιπατών εν μέσω των heπτά λυχνιών των χρυσών;
- † Rv. 2: 8, πρώτος και ho έσχατος hός εγένετο νεκρός και έζησεν;
- † Rv. 2:12, έχων την ηρομφαίαν την δίστομον την οξειαν;
- † Rv. 2:18, ηυιός του θεού ho έχων τους οφθαλμούς αυτού¹⁰¹ hως φλόγα πυρός και hoi πόδες αυτού hόμοιοι χαλκολιβάνω;
- † Rv. 3:1, έχων τα heπτά πνεύματα του θεού και τους heπτά αστέρας;
- † Rv. 3:7, hάγιος ho αληθινός ho έχων την κλείν δαυίδ ho ανοίγων και ουδείς κλείσει και κλείων και ουδείς ανοίγει;
- † Rv. 3:14, αμήν ho μάρτυς ho πιστός και [ho] αληθινός η αρχή της κτίσεως του θεού.”

¹⁰¹ The uncertainty brackets were removed because confirmation was found at RP, SBL & TH.

“The ... says this:

- † Rv. 2:1, One Exercising Might [over] the seven stars in His right [hand], the One Walking About amid the seven golden lampstands;
- † Rv. 2:8, First and the Last, Who, was brought forth [from] decay¹⁰² and lived;
- † Rv. 2:12, One having a sharp two-edged sword;
- † Rv. 2:18, Son of God, the One Having His eyes as flaming fire; His feet like fine bronze;
- † Rv. 3:1, One Having the Seven Spirits of God, and the Seven Stars;
- † Rv. 3:7, Holy, the True, the One Having the Key of David, the One Opening, and no one will lock, the One Locking, and no one opens;
- † Rv. 3:14, Amen, the Witness, the Faithful, the True, the Architect of [the] God’s Creation.”

This picture of Christ’s glory and power is similar, but not identical, to that found in Chapter 1:

- † there He is the Son of Man,
- † here the Son of God;
- † there He is present amid the lampstands,
- † here He walks among them;
- † there He holds the keys of Thanatos and Hades,
- † here the key of David;
- † here is great emphasis on His power to lock and unlock;
- † here He is seen as having an intimate role in Creation.

This, the mightiest of all warriors, the one who slays Goliath sevenfold, is armed with: stars, lampstands, resurrection life, sword like speech,

¹⁰² Jesus was raised from the dead before necrosis could set in.

blazing eyes, brazen feet (He's very sure of His step), holiness, truth, and the key of David. He carries no sword or shield, no bow or arrow, no spear, not even a sling and stone. He slays His enemies with the breath of His mouth: even with absolution, confession, forgiveness, reconciliation, redemption, and salvation. Whatever He touches, He makes righteous. His power is the Spirit, not in temporal things. He is the Architect of the Father's Creation, as well as the Father's New-Creation. He is the Witness, the Faithful, the True. He is the Amen, "the Ending, He"¹⁰³.

Jesus' Knowledge of the Stars

All of the following begin with the phrase/word, "οίδα", "I have known". God knows our hearts, whatever we think we have been hiding from others. Some of the observations of the messengers are lengthy, others quite terse; the praise of Philadelphia is exceptionally long. The absence of any praise for Sardis or Laodicea is astonishing.

Ephesus.

Rv. 2:2f, τα έργα σου και τον κόπον και την ηυπομονήν σου και ήότι ου δύνη βαστάσαι κακούς και επείρασας τους λέγοντας ηεαυτούς αποστόλους και ουκ εισίν και ηεύρες αυτούς ψευδείς και ηυπομονήν έχεις και εβάστασας διά το όνομα μου και ου κεκοπίακες;

"Rv. 2:2f, your works, the labor, your perseverance: that, you are unable to endure corruption. You tried those saying they [were] Apostles: and, are not. You found them [to be] false. You have perseverance; you endured through My name: not having tired;

¹⁰³ https://hymnary.org/text/of_the_fathers_love_begotten

(Acts 18:19, 21, 24; 19:1, 17, 26, 28, 34, 35; 20:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 15:32; 16:8; Ephesians 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:3; 2 Timothy 1:18; 4:12; Revelation 1:11; 2:1). Paul has an extensive and lengthy ministry at Ephesus, which gives us background for John's report. There were genuine Christians at Ephesus, who were baptized with the Holy Spirit. The Christian ecclesia had evidently separated from the synagogue at John's writing. There was also a large and powerful idolatry cult/business for Diana there.

Smyrna.

Rv. 2:9f, σου την θλίψιν και την πτωχείαν αλλά πλούσιος ει και την βλασφημίαν εκ των λεγόντων ιουδαίους είναι ηεαυτούς και ουκ εισίν αλλά συναγωγή του σατανά μη φοβού ή μέλλεις πάσχειν;

Rv. 2:9f, your tribulation, and poverty: but, you are wealthy; the blasphemy of those claiming to be Jews themselves, are not, but, [are] a synagogue of Satan. Fear none [of the things] which you are about to suffer;

(Revelation 1:11; 2:8). There is no further information about the star of Smyrna. John is already drawing a distinction between Christian Jews and others who are not, in his terms, Jews at all. For John, Judaism is Satanism and the synagogue is a place of Satan worship. The only true Jew is a Christian Jew (Romans 2:28-29). So, we know from this that the Christian ecclesia and its star have already separated from Judaism.

Pergamum.

Rv. 2:13, που κατοικεί ή όπου η θρόνος του σατανά και κρατεί το όνομα μου και ουκ ηρνήσω την πίστιν μου και εν ταις ημέραις αντιπάζ ηο μάρτυς μου ηο πιστός [μου] ηος απεκτάνθη παρ ηυμίν ή όπου ηο σατανάς κατοικεί;

Rv. 2:13, where you live, where Satan's throne [is]. You support My Name. You did not deny My faith in the days of Antipas, My faithful witness, who was put to death among you, where Satan dwells;

(Revelation 1:11; 2:12). There is no further information about the star of Pergamum either. Church tradition holds Antipas¹⁰⁴ to be that star. The ecclesial situation is the same as that in Smyrna: Judaism/Satanism is deeply and thoroughly entrenched in both. Pergamum was the capital (throne); Smyrna was its major seaport.

Thyatira.

Rv. 2:19, σου τα έργα και την αγάπην και την πίστιν και την διακονίαν και την ηυπομονήν σου και τα έργα σου τα έσχατα πλείονα των πρώτων;

Rv. 2:19, of you: your works, love, faith, service, and perseverance. Your last works [are] greater than the first;

(Acts 16:14, 40; Revelation 1:11; 2:18, 24). There does not appear to be any ecclesia in Thyatira, at first. Paul meets Lydia of Thyatira by the river in Macedonia; she first offered hospitality to Paul and his companions, where they stayed after their release from the Philippian jail: her house is unlikely to be in Thyatira. She is unlikely to have started any ecclesia in Thyatira: but we know little about its star, organization, development, or if there had been a previous synagogue there.

¹⁰⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antipas_of_Pergamum

Sardis.

Rv. 3:1, σου τα έργα;

Rv. 3:1, your works;

(Revelation 1:11; 3:1, 4). Jesus knows. We do not.

Philadelphia.

Rv. 3:8ff, σου τα έργα ιδού δέδωκα ενώπιον' σου θύραν ηνεωγμένην ἣν οὐδεὶς δύναται κλείσαι αὐτήν ἵνα μικρὰν ἔχεις δύναμιν καὶ ἐτήρησας' μου τὸν λόγον καὶ οὐκ ἠρνήσω τὸ ὄνομα' μου ιδού διδώ ἐκ τῆς συναγωγῆς τοῦ σατανᾶ τῶν λεγόντων ἑαυτοὺς Ἰουδαίους εἶναι καὶ οὐκ εἰσὶν ἀλλὰ ψεύδονται ιδού ποιήσω αὐτοὺς ἵνα ἠήξουσιν καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν ἐνώπιον τῶν ποδῶν σου καὶ γνώσιν ἵνα ἐγὼ ἠγάπησα' σε ἵνα ἐτήρησας τὸν λόγον τῆς ὑπομονῆς μου καὶ ἐγὼ σε τηρήσω ἐκ τῆς ὥρας τοῦ πειρασμοῦ τῆς μελλούσης ἔρχεσθαι ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκουμένης ὅλης πειράσαι τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς;

Rv. 3:8ff, your works. Look! I have given before you, a door, having been opened, which no one has power to lock [ἱ]; since, you have little power: you guarded My word; you did not deny My name. Look! I would give [those] from the synagogue of Satan, those saying themselves to be Jews: they are not; but, they lie. Look! I will make them, so that they will come: they will prostrate before your feet. They would know that I loved you. Since, you guarded the word of My perseverance; I also will guard you from the hour of the impending peril, to come upon the whole habitation to imperil those inhabiting [ἡρῆ] the land (Ha' Aretz).

(Revelation 1:11; 3:7). Other than what is written here, we have no hard evidence to show why John heaps this most extensive of praises on

Philadelphia. Perhaps its name and reputation were enough that Philadelphia would not stoop to the trivialities commonly found in other cities. Love of brother was a major point of the Law; perhaps love of brother would result in love of Jesus. Love is, after all, an open door. We just do not know much else.

Laodicea.

Rv. 3:15, σου τα έργα.”

Rv. 3:15, your works.”

(Colossians 2:1; 4:13, 15, 16; Revelation 1:11; 3:14). Jesus knows. We do not. Paul writes about sincere believers in Laodicea: perhaps they have all been martyred when John writes.

Jesus' Criticism of the Stars

Jesus' criticisms are similarly varied.

Ephesus.

Rv. 2:4f, “αλλά έχω κατά σου ήότι την αγάπην σου την πρώτην αφήκες μνημόνευε ουν πόθεν πέπτωκας και μετανόησον και τα πρώτα έργα ποιήσον ει δε μη έρχομαι σοι και κινήσω την λυχνίαν σου εκ του τόπου αυτής εάν μη μετανοήσης.”

Rv. 2:4f, “But, I have [this] against you; that, you denied your first love: so, remember whence you have fallen. Repent. Do the first works. Yet, if not, I come to you. I will move your lampstand from her place, if you would not repent.”

The verb ἀφίκες is a very strong active word meaning send away, deny, divorce, dismiss: it implies deliberate action from which one can repent. Our earlier translation was intentionally softened, because this star's faith seems sound in other respects. Our first love is invariably being begotten from above; that discovery, when the Spirit of God first shows us that our sins are forgiven; God has already provided everything we need in life (Matthew 6:8): we never need to ever ask God for things. However, we can get used to being cared for; take such gifts for granted; and stop being thankful for them. Our ingratitude, leads to other sins, as we become less and less forgiving of others. What was once our love of duty or our duty of love, becomes just duty, calloused, hardened, uncaring, unfeeling: a kind of relentless, but unkind, perseverance... a Grinch... a Grumpel Stiltskin. We need to be reminded that God is the source of everything we are and have: our restored gratitude replenishes our ability to forgive, makes us gentler, kinder, and softer again.

This can be complicated by covetousness, loneliness, self-pity, and other concerns (Matthew 13:22). Incessant Bible study leads to spiritual questions that few others share. Few others understand the emotional and spiritual battles confronting religious leaders. A spouse may not even have time enough from children and other duties to pray together, even occasionally. Unfruitfulness, as with Jonah in Israel may also be discouraging. Low pay can demoralize. This opens the door to other temptations.

Nevertheless, ingratitude is the root cause in loss of first love: so, the cure is remembering to be thankful for all the good things that God has already provided. We really do have everything we need (Matthew 6:8). We need to say thank you, meaningfully, more often. Gratitude is the right attitude.

The idea that ingratitude has infected the worship of Israelites since 930 BC is a gross understatement of the dark reality (Romans 1:20-25).

The penalty is the moving or removing of the star's lampstand: he/she will lose her/his church. Ephesus was a city that had to move on a regular basis: every time the harbor silted over, trade was lost, a new harbor had to be found, and the city moved: eventually, this reduced Ephesus to the status of an insignificant fishing village. Given Ephesus' history, the star could not have missed the point. This prophecy was limited to the star's lifetime.

Smyrna.

There is no criticism of the star of Smyrna.

Pergamum.

Rv. 2:14ff, “αλλ έχω κατά σου ολίγα ήότι έχεις εκεί κρατούντας την διδαχήν βαλαάμ ηος εδίδασκεν τω βαλάκ βαλείν σκάνδαλον ενώπιον των ηυιών ισραήλ φαγείν ειδωλόθυτα και πορνεύσαι ηούτως έχεις και συ κρατούντας την διδαχήν νικολαϊτών ηομοίως μετανόησον ουν ει δε μη έρχομαι σοι ταχύ και πολεμήσω μετ αυτών εν τη ηρομφαία του στόματος μου.”

Rv. 2:14ff, “But I have a few [things] against you; since, you have there, those supporting the teaching of Balaam who now teaches Balak to throw a snare before the children of Israel: to eat idol sacrifices, and to commit fornication. Thus, you also have those supporting the doctrine of Overcomers as well. Therefore, repent! Yet, if [you do] not, I come to you quickly. I will war with them with the sword of My mouth.”

Balaam (Numbers 22; 23; 24; 31:8, 16; Deuteronomy 23:4; Joshua 24:9; Micah 6:5) was a prophet, that offered himself for sale. He refused to curse Israel; but, convinced Balak (Numbers 22; 23; 24; Joshua 24:9; Judges 11:25; Micah 6:5) that banqueting and sex could defeat Israel.

He was an enemy attacking the Church from without. This is not that Balaam: but he is a type of what happens in Pergamum in the first century. Evidently, that was a transferable concept that Israel easily picked up to seduce and subvert their enemies. The star of Pergamum, says nothing about this, and may have been influenced by it. Instead of hating the sin, while loving the sinner, Christians become ensnared in demonic activities like idolatry and fornication: it all starts with the nonchalance of believing that these activities are not really all that bad... soon the victims are ensnared and cannot escape. Jesus wars with the sword of His mouth; the Overcomers war with weapons of metal, and money, conquering by brute animal force. When Paul remarks that he fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, he may have been referring to some people, Overcomers.

Thyatira.

Rv. 2:20ff, “αλλά έχω κατά σου ήότι αφείς την γυναίκα ιεζάβελ ηη λέγουσα ηεαυτήν προφήτιν και διδάσκει και πλανά τους εμούς δούλους πορνεύσαι και φαγειν ειδωλόθυτα και έδωκα αυτή χρόνον ήίνα μετανοήση και ου θέλει μετανοήσαι εκ της πορνείας αυτής ιδού βάλλω αυτήν εις κλίνην και τους μοιχεύοντασ μετ αυτής εις θλίψιν μεγάλην εάν μη μετανοήσουσιν εκ των έργων αυτής και τα τέκνα αυτής αποκτενώ εν θανάτω και γνώσονται πάσαι ηαι εκκλησίαι ήότι εγώ ειμί ηο εραυνών νεφρούσ και καρδιάσ και δώσω ηυμίν ηεκάστω κατά τα έργα ηυμών”

Rv. 2:20ff, “But, I have [this] against you: since, you release the woman Jezebel, the one calling herself a prophet. She teaches and deceives My servants to commit fornication and to eat idol sacrifices. I gave her time, so that she would repent. She did not wish to repent of her fornication. Look! I throw her into a bed; and those [who] will be committing fornication with her into great tribulation, unless they will repent of her works. I will kill her children by Thanatos. The ekklesiae will all know; since, I Am the One Searching minds and hearts. I will give to you each according to your works.”

Jezebel (1 Kings 16:31; 18:4, 13, 19; 19:1, 2; 21:5, 7, 11, 14, 15, 23, 25; 2 Kings 9:7, 10, 22, 30, 36, 37) was the queen of Israel who led her husband Ahab (1 Kings 16:28, 29, 30, 33; 17:1; 18:1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 12, 16, 17, 20, 41, 42, 44, 45, 46; 19:1; 20:2, 13, 14, 34; 21:1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 15, 16, 18, 20, 21, 24, 25, 27, 29; 22:20, 39, 40, 41, 49, 51; 2 Kings 1:1; 3:1, 5; 8:16, 18, 25, 27, 28, 29; 9:7, 8, 9, 25, 29; 10:1, 10, 11, 17, 18, 30; 21:3, 13; and throughout 2 Chronicles chapters 18; 21; 22; Jeremiah 29:21, 22; Micah 6:16) in the worship of Baal¹⁰⁵. This is not that Jezebel: but she is a type of what happens in Thyatira in the first century. We have been led to believe that Jezebel's Baalism involved both male and female cult prostitutes¹⁰⁶, with the attendant sex acts being an expected part of worship along with glutinous feasting. The implication is that this was the practice of internal enemies that had infiltrated within the synagogue; whereas Balaam and Balak were external enemies.

Sardis.

Rv. 3:1ff “ὅτι ὄνομα ἔχεις ὅτι ζῆς καὶ νεκρὸς εἶ γίνου γρηγορῶν καὶ στήρισον τὰ λοιπὰ ἢ ἐμέλλον ἀποθανεῖν οὐ γὰρ ἠέυρηκα σου ἔργα πεπληρωμένα ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ μου μνημόνευε οὐν πῶς εἴληφας καὶ ἤκουσας καὶ τήρει καὶ μετανόησον εἰάν οὐν μὴ γρηγορήσης ἠήξω ἡὼς κλέπτης καὶ οὐ μὴ γνῶς ποίαν ἡὼραν ἠήξω ἐπὶ σε”

Rv. 3:1ff “since you have a reputation, that you live. You are dead. Be brought forth awaking. Stabilize the rest, which are now about to die: for, I have not found your works having been completed before My God. So, remember how you have received, and heard. Guard! Repent! So,

¹⁰⁵ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baal>

¹⁰⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacred_prostitution_in_ancient_Greece

if you would not be awakened, I will come as a thief. You would never, ever know what hour I will come upon you.”

This appears to be one of those places, I do not even call it an ecclesia, that is really popular. I cannot imagine a more scathing condemnation than, “You are dead.” Until we begin to grasp John’s point and Jesus’ gift, that the power of the Spirit really is miraculous (John 4:5-30; 7:37-39): we cannot and do not begin to understand Revelation. Jesus intends to recreate, to bring forth, to beget from above, a dead star to life, and a dead town to a living ecclesia.

Philadelphia.

There is no criticism of Philadelphia.

Laodicea.

Rv. 3:15ff ἥτι οὔτε ψυχρός εἰ οὔτε ζεστός ὄφελον ψυχρός ἢ ἡ ζεστός
οὕτως ἥτι χλιαρός εἰ καὶ οὔτε ζεστός οὔτε ψυχρός μέλλω σε ἐμέσαι ἐκ
τοῦ στόματος μου ἥτι λέγεις ἥτι πλούσιος εἰμὶ καὶ πεπλούτηκα καὶ
οὐδὲν χρεῖαν ἔχω καὶ οὐκ οἶδας ἥτι σὺ εἰ ἡ ταλαίπωρος καὶ ἐλεεινός¹⁰⁷
καὶ πτωχός καὶ τυφλός καὶ γυμνός συμβουλεύω σοὶ ἀγοράσαι παρ ἐμοῦ
χρυσίον πεπυρωμένον ἐκ πυρός ἥτινα πλουτήσης καὶ ἡμάτια λευκά ἥτινα
περιβάλῃ καὶ μὴ φανερωθῇ ἡ αἰσχύνῃ τῆς γυμνότητος σου καὶ
κολλούριον ἐγχρίσαι τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς σου ἥτινα βλέπῃς ἐγὼ ἡόσους εἰάν
φιλῶ ἐλέγχω καὶ παιδεύω ζήλευε οὖν καὶ μετανόησον

¹⁰⁷ 1885 has ἐλεινός.

Rv. 3:15ff “since, you are neither sweet¹⁰⁸, nor spicy¹⁰⁹. If only you are now sweet or spicy. Thus: since, you are bland; neither spicy nor sweet, I am about to spit you from my mouth. Since, you say, ‘Since, I am wealthy; I have been filled; I have need of nothing.’ You have known not: since, you are wretched, without mercy, poverty stricken, senseless, and naked. I challenge you to buy from me gold, having been purified by fire, that you would be wealthy; white garments, that you would wrap around [yourself], [that] the shame of your nakedness would not be brought to light; and eye wash to anoint your eyes, that you could see. As many, if I love, I rebuke, and discipline. Therefore, be determined and repent.”

We encounter a second dead town. The first one fancied its popularity. This one fancies its wealth: which, as with, “The Emperor’s New Clothes”, is invisible, transparent. The same healing cure is necessary. Jesus stands beating on the door to bring new life. The dead must hear, be thirsty, and willing (Revelation 22:17).

Notes

Ephesus has an extenuating condition:

Rv. 2:6, “αλλά τούτο έχεις ὅτι μισεῖς τα ἔργα των νικολαιϊτών ἡ καγὼ μισῶ”

¹⁰⁸ Sucrose means sweet, not cold.

¹⁰⁹ Zest means spicy, not hot in the thermal sense. This is talking about taste, not temperature.

Rv. 2:6, “But, you have this; since, you hate the works of the Overcomers, which I also hate.”

Up until this point, discussion has been exclusively about the bishop.

Smyrna will face unjust imprisonment.

Rv. 2:10, ιδού μέλλει βάλλειν ho διάβολος εξ ηυμών εις φυλακήν hina πειρασθήτε και ήέχητε¹¹⁰ θλίψιν ημερών δέκα”

Rv. 2:10, “Look! The Devil is about to throw [some] of you into prison, so that you would be imperiled. You will have a tribulation of ten days.”

Thyatira must hang on for dear life.

Rv. 2:24f, ηυμίν δε λέγω τοις λοιποίς τοις εν θυατείροις ήόσοι ουκ ήχουσιν την διδαχήν ταύτην ηοίτινες ουκ ήγνωσαν τα βαθέα του σατανά ηως λέγουσιν ου βάλλω εφ ηυμάς ήλλο βάρος πλην ηο ήχετε κρατήσατε ήχρις ηου αν ήήξω

Rv. 2:24f, Yet, I tell the rest of you in Thyatira, as many as do not have this teaching, whoever did not know the depths of Satan. As they are saying, I do not throw upon you another burden. ²⁵ Otherwise, whatever you have, control until whenever I would arrive.

¹¹⁰ 1885 prefers ήχητε.

Jesus' Comforts for the Martyrs

Ephesus.

Rv. 2:7, “τω νικώντι δώσω αυτώ φαγείν εκ του ξύλου της ζωής ή ό εστίν εν τω παραδείσω του θεού”

Rv. 2:7, “I will give to the one overcoming, to eat from the Tree of Life, which is in the Paradise of God.”

Smyrna.

Rv. 2:10f, “γίνου πιστός άχρι θανάτου και δώσω σοι τον στέφανον της ζωής ... ή νικών ου μη αδικηθή εκ του θανάτου του δευτέρου”

Rv. 2:10f, “Be brought forth faithful until death. I will give you the wreath of life ... The one overcoming, could never, ever be wronged by the second death.”

Pergamum.

Rv. 2:17, “τω νικώντι δώσω αυτώ του μάννα του κεκρυμμένου και δώσω αυτώ ψήφον λευκήν και επί την ψήφον όνομα καινόν γεγραμμένον ή ουδείς οίδεν ει μη ή λαμβάνων”

Rv. 2:17, “I will give to the one overcoming, of the manna, having been hidden. I will give them a white stone; upon the stone a new name, having been written, which no one has known except the one receiving [it].”

Thyatira.

Rv. 2:26ff, “και ή νικών και ή τηρών άχρι τέλους τα έργα μου δώσω αυτώ εξουσίαν επί των εθνών και ποιμανεί αυτούς εν ήράβδω σιδηρά

ἥως τὰ σκεύη τὰ κεραμικά συντρίβεται ἥως καγὼ εἴληφα παρὰ τοῦ πατρός μου καὶ δώσω αὐτῶν τὸν ἀστέρα τὸν πρωῖνόν”

Rv. 2:26ff, “Those overcoming; those guarding My works until [the] end: I will give them authority over the Gentiles. They will shepherd them, with a rod of iron; they are broken as the potter’s vessel. As I also have received from My Father. I will give them the dawn star.”

Sardis.

Rv. 3:4f, “ἀλλά ἔχεις ὀλίγα ὀνόματα ἐν σάρδεσιν ἃ οὐκ ἐμόλυναν τὰ ἡμάτια αὐτῶν καὶ περιπατήσουσιν μετ’ ἐμοῦ ἐν λευκοῖς ὅτι ἄξιοι εἰσὶν ἡ νικῶν οὕτως περιβαλεῖται ἐν ἡματίοις λευκοῖς καὶ οὐ μὴ ἐξαλείψω τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῆς βίβλου τῆς ζωῆς καὶ ἠομολογήσω τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐνώπιον τοῦ πατρός μου καὶ ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀγγέλων αὐτοῦ”

Rv. 3:4f, “But, you have a few names in Sardis, who did not defile their garments. They will walk with me in white: since, they are worthy.” Thus, those overcoming, will be wrapped in white garments. I will never, ever erase their names from the Book of Life. I will confess their names before My Father, and before His messengers.”

Philadelphia.

Rv. 3:11ff, “ἔρχομαι ταχύ κράτει ἡ ἔχεις ἵνα μηδεὶς λάβῃ τὸν στέφανόν σου ἡ νικῶν ποιήσω αὐτὸν στύλον ἐν τῷ ναῷ τοῦ θεοῦ μου καὶ ἔξω οὐ μὴ ἐξέλθῃ ἔτι καὶ γράψω ἐπ’ αὐτὸν τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ μου καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς πόλεως τοῦ θεοῦ μου τῆς καινῆς ἱερουσαλήμ ἡ καταβαίνουσα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ μου καὶ τὸ ὄνομα μου τὸ καινόν”

Rv. 3:11ff, “I come quickly. Strengthen what you have, so that no one would take your wreath. Those overcoming, I will make them a stela in

the temple of My God. They would never, ever come outside [ever] again. I will write on them the Name of My God; and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, coming down from the heaven from My God; and My New Name.”

Laodicea.

Rv. 3:20f, “ιδού ήστηκα επί την θύραν και κρούω εάν τις ακούση της φωνής μου και ανοίξη την θύραν εισελεύσομαι προς αυτόν και δειπνήσω μετ αυτού και αυτός μετ εμού ho νικών δώσω αυτό καθίσαι μετ εμού εν τω θρόνω μου ηως καγώ ενίκησα και εκάθισα μετά του πατρός μου εν τω θρόνω αυτού”

Rv. 3:20f, “Look! I have stood at the door, and I knock. If anyone would hear My voice and would open the door; I will come in to them. I will dine with them and they with Me.” Those overcoming, I will give to them to sit with Me in My throne: as I also overcame, I sat with My Father in His throne.”

Closing

The closing statements are identical: but, sometimes placed in a different order.

Rv. 2:7; Rv. 2:11; Rv. 2:17; Rv. 2:29; Rv. 3:6; Rv. 3:13; Rv. 3:22; “ho έχων ους ακουσάτω τι το πνεύμα λέγει ταις εκκλησίαις”

Rv. 2:7; Rv. 2:11; Rv. 2:17; Rv. 2:29; Rv. 3:6; Rv. 3:13; Rv. 3:22; “Those having an ear, let them hear what the Spirit tells the ekklesiae.”

Prophecies

There are no specific prophecies, found in Chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation, that are not fulfilled within the lifetimes of those specifically addressed. Heavenly blessings, by their very nature being eternal, are not prophecies either: since, they have no specific time or place of fulfilment.

More specifically, there is no prophetic Historicism¹¹¹ to be found here. We cannot look at the names of the seven ecclesiae and determine that each represents a particular set of centuries, or era in the historical development of Christianity. Such ideas represent the worst sort of wishful thinking and lead to the grossest misrepresentations of historical development. Historical development is an exceedingly complex and compound subject: which, I doubt that any of us have got “right” yet.

Applications

Our Calling.

Solomon finished the Temple around 959 BC (1 Kings 6:37-38). By 950 BC his own house was finished (1 Kings 7:1; 9:10); the Ark was installed (1 Kings 8:1-9); the Temple was filled with the smoke of the glory of God (1 Kings 8:10-9; 2 Chronicles 7:1-3). In his dedicatory prayer, Solomon specifically prays for strangers (1 Kings 8:41-43): from that moment forward, Israel, Ha’Aretz, was consecrated to gathering the world to God in fulfillment of the promises to Abraham. There were a few bright spots: as around 722 BC, when Hezekiah resisted the onslaught of the Assyrians and Jerusalem was spared; or when Josiah led Judea and Israel in a great revival at his famous Passover (before 609 BC). But by 586 BC, the Sh^okinah had departed; by 516 BC, the Ark

¹¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Poverty_of_Historicism

had disappeared, and was never recovered; the Sh^okinah did not return: and when He returned (4/6 BC-33 AD, Israel/Judah rejected Him. Ha'Aretz had failed completely.

As much time and prayer as we have given to the study of the words, ekklesia/ekklesiae, we have failed to grasp its significance. It is not a city assembly. It is not a synagogue. It is not even a church in the normal sense.

“Those having an ear, let them hear what the Spirit tells the ekklesiae.”

It is the calling out of a believing and faithful people from the old Ha'Aretz, from the nations (Asia and others), and even from death (their spiritual condition) to new life to be the new Ha'Aretz and fulfill what God and Solomon consecrated us to do. This is why we will see the 144,000 evangelists and others ride forth. It is the calling out of the Lord's army to follow Christ into spiritual battle and to lay down our lives for our enemies. It is the calling out of Spiritual soldiers, using Spiritual weapons exclusively, to engage the evil of this world in Spiritual battle: weapons of the flesh, besides being insufficient in power, are strictly forbidden.

Under Francis Schaeffer (1984), Bill Bright (2003), Peter Gillquist (2012), Billy Graham (2018), and many others, it seemed as if we might be catching a glimpse of Christ's and the Spirit's calling in ekklesia/ekklesiae. These leaders have all died, and with no one to step up and take their places, it feels as if we have lost our way, once again.

Until we grasp the full intensity of this word, ekklesia/ekklesiae, together with the fullness of its meaning, we cannot begin to grasp the

rest of Revelation. This is why we returned to Revelation 1:1 and changed all these words to ekklesia/ekklesiae. It is the fullness of Christ's and the Spirit's calling in ekklesia/ekklesiae, in fulfilment of Solomon's prayer of consecration, that explains the meaning of Revelation.

We have been called out, to pick up our crosses and follow Jesus. Attention! Right shoulder arms! Forward march!

The weapon not mentioned in Ephesians 6 is a metaphorical beam, approximately 4 x 4 and a little longer than an individual's height. This we must carry over our shoulder. If any wish to crucify us, at least we've spared them the trouble (not literally) of finding and cutting a crossbar. We march toward death: the death of death in the death of Christ. This is not suicidal: we lay down our lives in the service of others.

Our Condition.

There are at least three opposing groups in this, or we believe, in any other human society. These appear to be facets of human nature; therefore, universal:

- † Overcomers/Dominators, those who desire to dominate others in willful disobedience of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit;
- † Christians, those who desire to serve others in humble obedience to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit;
- † Deniers, those who desire to serve only themselves and for whom there are no standards other than self.

The dividing lines between these groups are fuzzy, and unclear. Many do not know enough of the Bible to discern the difference. Many prefer the literal, rather than the Spiritual, interpretation of Scripture: thus, they fall

into the trap of not reading the Old Testament through the lens of the Cross, the lens of the Spirit; then they mistakenly approve all the physical abuses found in the Old Testament, not realizing that Pentecost has erased every single one of them. Others are wholly absorbed with other interests, or seem so: the Bible shows that such denial is really impossible (Romans 1:18-20).

Overcomers.

We are all Overcomers/Dominators by nature: our base selfish animal instincts operate soon after birth. If someone offends me or strikes me, I emotionally want to strike back, to seek revenge. If, I have been defeated in the past, or if I am naturally cowardly, I may suppress my emotions, until I can find a subtler means to retaliate. These emotions make me an Overcomer/Dominator by nature. If put in power, I will solve problems by force, fighting, war, and the like; or if I see our power as the weaker, I will solve problems by craft and subterfuge; or I will accept loss, letting my anger simmer on the back burner, until conditions change. But, as soon as conditions do change, my position also changes: I become an instant enemy. The Overcomer/Dominator is not really compatible with Biblical Christianity: in spite of this, we can easily identify many movements of Overcomers/Dominators that sought to be known as Christian. Overcomers/Dominators, not to be confused with overcomers (little o), are a type of pseudo-Christian movement, seeing themselves as the source of all victory; maintaining dominance over others by force, by human might which makes right; winning is the only thing that matters; vengeance is ours, they claim, and our enemies must be crushed: they really see themselves as gods, called to rule over others. Overcomers/Dominators necessarily and mostly use weapons of flesh in their attacks.

Christians.

We overcome our base animal instincts by willingly submitting to the power of the Spirit and the authority of the Son. As the Law of Liberty

is written on our hearts, our natural corruption is defeated and we are turned away from the desire for dominance.

Had we been paying closer attention to Moses at Sinai, or earlier with Abraham, we might have realized that God always opposed such a bestial mentality: but, Israel refused to listen at Sinai; rejecting the gift of the Spirit from thorough application; Israel had to learn many painful lessons brought about by her primitive condition: but, when we search the Law more carefully we realize that such primitive behavior never had God's approval. If God's children were bound to fight, He either had to allow them to fight, or destroy them: so He patiently awaits our repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

Jesus clearly forbids such behavior among His overcomers, who must learn to turn the other cheek: He demanded that we change our behavior in accordance with the Law of God. He showed us our utter sinfulness, as well as the glory and greatness of God's forgiveness; He showed us how, out of gratitude for God's forgiveness, we should learn to be forgiving as God is forgiving, even of His enemies. We are to cease behavior as wild animals, and be kind to one another, as was the Good Samaritan.

Jesus exposes our sinfulness gently, and provides the healing mercies of the Spirit: within hours He has turned the Sychar tragedy into the Sychar evangelist, and she has brought many of that town to Jesus (John 4:4-42).

Deniers.

Deniers deny all authority and power, human or Divine; they do entirely as they wish: they do not see Balaam and Balak, or Ahab and Jezebel as problems. The lascivious destruction that such behavior brings upon society is of no concern to them. The fact is that such lasciviousness

always brings with it, very self-destructive STDs: both mental and physical. The ancient versions included burning children to death as living sacrifices. The modern versions include abortion; Sodomy is a renewed repetition of an ancient practice. I'm okay; you're okay; not okay: the patience of love has and must have its limits; we love the sinner, but not the sin. God's authority and power are real. Deniers are just wrong.

Healing.

The tendency of Overcomers/Dominators is to control all human defects by force. Put the abnormal, by their Overcomer/Dominator standards, to death; beat them without mercy; imprison them; and more.

The tendency of Deniers is to do nothing; not even admitting that any behavior is abnormal; or that behavior abusive of Created Design Intent is abnormal and wrong.

Christ compels us to deal with our own sinfulness: day by day, our awareness of our own uncleanness becomes darker and uglier. As more and more light shines we become aware of seemingly smaller sins we couldn't see at first. Since we have nothing of our own, except our sins, to offer to God: this is a blessing. We also, in this, become more and more aware of the greatness of God's forgiveness: we love Him all the more, as our lives become motivated by gratitude (Luke 7:47; Luke 18:13). Such an attitude of gratitude results in us forgiving others as God has forgiven us. Thus, when confronted with abnormal, corrupt, and sinful behavior; instead of punishing we seek to forgive: we pursue confession, absolution, forgiveness, repentance, and healing. John 4:4-42 and Revelation 22:17 become the solution for every sin: for, only the Spirit of God has the power to bring us fully to the Son and to the Father, and to complete healing.

This would be so much easier to say, had I not, with my own children, sought parenting by domination. I did not yet see this lesson, so I wrongfully supposed that if Solomon spoke of corporal punishment, I must vigorously apply it. But Solomon ruled a primitive society; a society that had not yet received the fullness of the Spirit. So, while Solomon had an excuse, I did and do not.

It is simply wrong to lead spouse, children, or any others by Domination. Domination is always wrong in this age. Christians, especially, must put away Domination, and put away Denial behavior as well, and always seek the Spirit's solution. I was wrong. We are wrong today.

Two thousand years after the death and resurrection of Christ; two thousand years after the coming of the Spirit: human society is still largely the wild animal behavior of Overcomers/Dominators and Deniers. If we were truly Christ centered in our obedience, and Spirit empowered in our actions: wars would cease; we would beat our swords into plowshares and our spears into pruning hooks; we would never learn war anymore (Isaiah 2:3-5; Micah 4:2-4). Obviously, in two thousand years, we still haven't got it right: we have failed the City of God.

This is the standard of behavior presented in ekklesia/ekklesiae, and concluded in Revelation 22:17. This is why we are called out, and what our warfare is to accomplish, without weapons in any ordinary physical sense: but by the cross and sword of Christ.

“... for, we walk around in the flesh: [but,] we do not soldier according to flesh: for, the weapons of our soldiering [are] not flesh, but powerful to God for demolishing strongholds [deceptions and schemes of error and vice]; pulling down [false] thoughts, and every high thing raised up against the

knowledge of God, and capturing every thought into the obedience of Christ.” — 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

We do not tear down the walls of Jericho with our hands. We march and trumpet: they fall down by themselves. We do not attack Nineveh, we preach there: they surrender by themselves. Like Elisha, we blind, capture, feast, and release our enemies (2 Kings 6:11-23). This is the age of the Power of the Spirit: we are forbidden the use of any material weapon or any mere physical force.

WWCPSTE

Winning the World for Christ by the Power of the Spirit, Today and Every day.

Are you considering whether or not to spank your children? Think twice before you do. Spanking is an instrument of the flesh: forbidden to Christians since the coming of the Spirit (Acts 1:8; 2: 1ff). So, in spite of Solomon, “sparing the rod will not spoil the child”. The popular TV show emphasizes, “Say it with words”. We say, “Say it with Spiritual words”. Make sure that you, yourself are in constant communication and communion with the Spirit (Luke 11:13). Having a clear conscience is not enough. Our consciences require incessant instruction from the Word of God, and the Spirit of God is our only infallible leader and teacher. Train yourself to seek the Spiritual interpretation of the Bible; not the literal interpretation of the Bible: see the Old Testament through the lens of Passover and Pentecost, of Jesus and the Spirit. When this is active in your life, speak to your children this way: teach them to seek the Spirit in all things. Show your children how the Spirit instructs your conscience: so that, He may instruct their consciences. I had a very literal view of the Old Testament and spanked my children faithfully, because I loved them dearly: the outcome has not been consistent, to say

the least. Speaking from my own experience: Don't go there; Don't ever go there.

What about politics. As long as we use Spiritual words to defy the evils of politics, as Paul did repeatedly, we are on solid ground: but, politics, in and of itself, is a tool of flesh, inherently prone to evil: and therefore, not a normative instrument for Christianity. To the extent that we can use Truth and Righteousness to contradict political deception, we are on safe ground. We stand outside Satan's gates and demand his surrender, with the release of all prisoners. This does not preclude a Christian from engaging directly in the political arena: but, it is a dangerous and murky ground with many ravenous temptations (like Balaam and Jezebel: remember that even Elijah was frightened of her and ran from her). Christians who undertake such risks may train for years before entering such an arena: some expect to be martyred for confronting evil so directly (observe the politics of the world for examples of modern political martyrs). Nevertheless, politics does not yield spiritual results, except as overruled by God's creativity and providence.

Sports: exactly which of our sports produces Spiritual results by Spiritual methods. How many decades have passed since anyone quoted,

“For when the One Great Scorer comes to mark against your name, He writes—not that you won or lost—but how you played the Game.” — Grantland Rice (1880-1954).

The same principles, on various scales, must be applied to all of life. This is easy to say, but not easy to do. Take courage: you will grow in grace. Just because this has become your standard, don't expect it of the non-Christian world: expect to apply forgiveness to all in liberal quantities.

“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.” — Luke 23:34

Appendix

My working hypothesis which we seek to disprove is that:

Since the giving of the Holy Spirit in Acts 1:8; 2:1ff, every form of capital, corporeal, and physical punishment is forbidden by the Law and Will of God.

This includes spanking of children, abuse of spouses, imprisonment, the death penalty, physical fighting, war, and much, much more.

When God decrees, “Vengeance is Mine” (Isaiah 63:4; Ezekiel 25:14; Romans 12:19), He effectively states that He alone, Creates and He alone may Punish by any capital, corporeal, or physical means.

This appears to be the case, even with Cain and Lamech (Genesis 4). Yet, most of the Old Testament records an endless succession of murders and wars. God does not approve of the development of empires (obviously by force), does He (Nimrod and Asshur: Genesis 10)? No. Absolutely not. Nevertheless, how can we approve or understand even David or Solomon, unless we conclude that their wild animal behavior must be forgiven because of the deficiency of the Spirit among them: so, their subjects, or even they, had no other means or method of solving problems other than by force?

Even so, there appears to be a predominant tendency to solve problems by Old Testament means, because of misinterpretation and misunderstanding caused by the failure to see the Old Testament through the lens of the Cross and of Pentecost, which remove all capital, corporeal, and physical authority (and power) from us. We are to turn the other cheek. We are to forgive 70 x 7 (infinitely). Peter missed the point when he cut off Malchus' ear with a sword (John 18:10).

The weapons of our warfare are spiritual and mighty; not weak and carnal (2 Corinthians 10:4). All the weapons of Ephesian 6 are Jesus: Jesus is our Truth, our Righteousness, our Gospel of Peace, our Faith, our Salvation; Jesus and the Spirit are the sword that must come from our mouths; prayer by Jesus and the Spirit to the Father may be our greatest weapon. Other passages mention our own crosses.

“... for, we walk around in the flesh: [but,] we do not soldier according to flesh: for, the weapons of our soldiering [are] not flesh, but powerful to God for demolishing strongholds [deceptions and schemes of error and vice]; pulling down [false] thoughts, and every high thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and capturing every thought into the obedience of Christ.” — 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

These are the words that clinched the argument for me. Since I cannot disprove this working hypothesis, I am compelled to accept and embrace it.

Soli Deo Gloria

¹¹² If you have been blessed or helped by any of these meditations, please repost, share, or use any of them as you wish. No rights are reserved. They are designed and intended for your free participation. They were freely received, and are freely given. No other permission is required for their use.