

Fifth Sunday of Easter

FIRST READING – Acts 11:1-18

The apostles and the brothers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him ³ and said, “You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.” ⁴ Peter began and explained everything to them precisely as it had happened: ⁵ “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw something like a large sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to where I was. ⁶ I looked into it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles, and birds of the air. ⁷ Then I heard a voice telling me, ‘Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.’ ⁸ “I replied, ‘Surely not, Lord! Nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’ ⁹ “The voice spoke from heaven a second time, ‘Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.’ ¹⁰ This happened three times, and then it was all pulled up to heaven again. ¹¹ “Right then three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea stopped at the house where I was staying. ¹² The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man’s house. ¹³ He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. ¹⁴ He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved.’ ¹⁵ “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ Then I remembered what the Lord had said: ‘John baptized with ^a water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ ¹⁷ So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?” ¹⁸ When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, “So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life.”

11:1-18 The chapters before the text (Acts 9–10) are filled with dramatic and miraculous death-to-life events. Saul’s conversion is the miraculous working of the Spirit to bring a prominent and zealous Jew to faith in Jesus (spiritual death-to-life). The raising of Dorcas from death (9:36–43) is a great physical miracle (physical death-to-life). The miraculous visions to Cornelius and then Peter in ch 10 lay the groundwork for the dramatic and miraculous working of God to include formerly unclean people to be part of his plan. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

11:1 *The apostles and the brothers.* At times “brothers” is used to refer to those of common Jewish lineage (2:29; 7:2), but in Christian contexts it denotes those united in Christ (6:3; 10:23). In matters of deep concern, the apostles did not act alone. The divine will gave guidance, and the apostles interpreted and exhorted, but the consent of the whole church was sought (“the whole group,” 6:5; “apostles and the brothers,” 11:1; “the church,” 11:22; “the church and the apostles and elders,” 15:4; cf. 15:22). (CSB)

Jewish converts to Christianity. (TLSB)

HEARD – Word of what had happened in Caesarea spread through the church like a wildfire fanned by a strong wind. And this is understandable, for what just happened was in

every sense of the word revolutionary. To bring non-Jews, Gentiles, into a full and equal relationship with Jews – entering their homes and eating their food at their tables – as Peter had done, was astounding. It left the church reeling from the suddenness with which this development had burst upon them. Up until now all the believers, even those in Samaria, were native Jews or those who upon accepting the Jewish faith, had submitted to all the ceremonial requirements, including circumcision. (LL)

Specifically, the affirmation of Christ as the Messiah and Savior. (TLSB)

News had traveled that Gentiles, *ethnē*, had received God's Word. This was no small bit of news as it was a radical departure from previous protocol, whereby people were brought into the faith as proselytes to the synagogue. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

11:2-3 The distinctions are highlighted and made clear: either you are circumcised or uncircumcised. Either you went and ate with them or you didn't. The circumcised group "criticized" or "contended," *diekrinonto*, with Peter, questioning which group he was a part of or whether he was trying to stand in the middle. For them, it was black or white. (The touchy application of race and ethnicity and divisions within Christianity may apply today in some contexts more than others; in some communities, the issue of black and white and all racism is very strong.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

11:2 *circumcised believers*. Jewish Christians. (CSB)

Those who insisted on circumcision along with saving faith. Cf Gal 3. Since the uncircumcised Gentiles were only beginning to be received into the Church, this title may be retrospective—we see the party forming from this incident. Cf Ac 15. (TLSB)

The ones who appear to be the most upset were those who insisted that circumcision and other Jewish laws were absolutely essential for membership in the Christian church. We might call them the circumcision party. They appeared on the scene again in Antioch some time later and created a problem among Paul and Peter and Barnabas (Gal. 2:11-13). (LL)

11:3 *uncircumcised men*. The Gentiles who would not observe the laws of clean and unclean food and would violate Jewish regulations concerning food preparation. (CSB)

The Pharisees had criticized Jesus for eating with sinners and tax collectors (Mk 2:15–16). (TLSB)

11:4–17 See notes on 10:1–23, 28–33.

11:4 EXPLAINED – Peter didn't reprimand his accusers, nor did he argue with them. He remembered His own attitude in this whole matter not more than four or five weeks earlier. Beautifully and carefully he led his hearer through the same schooling he had received from the Lord. (LL)

To defend himself, Peter begins an orderly account of events, much in the Lukan style of how he set to write the Books of Luke and Acts. It is as if Peter is on trial and begins to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth (so help him God!). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

11:5-7 The parallels between vv 5–10 and 10:10–16 are clear. The virtual repetition corroborates the story. Peter is practically “in another world” deep within himself and connected to God—in the context of prayer and a “trance” and a “vision,” a triple introspection. The “sheet,” *othonēn* (like a tablecloth?), came specifically to him, and the menagerie was meant for him to see. Peter understands the voice to be the Lord, *Kyrie*. The specific command addressed to him by name, “Rise, Peter; kill and eat,” leaves no doubt what he is to do. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

11:8-9 For how shocking a command this is, Peter’s refusal to God’s clear directive is bold! His point that nothing “common,” *koinon*, or “unclean” has ever crossed his lips is a source of pride and faithfulness for a Jew. Here playing with “common” can yield some homiletical fruit. Its meaning of “sharing in something” or “fellowship” can have interesting application in who God set apart (only the Jews?), who shares in the promise, and even in table fellowship as it comes to understanding of altar fellowship and Holy Communion shared only among those who have been made one in faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

11:10 The repetition of this three times must not be lost on Peter, as it seems to be God’s signature method for dealing with him (Jn 13:38; 21:15–17). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

11:11-12 Here, Peter’s vision and Cornelius’s (10:1–8) intertwine. The three men are sent and received, and Peter’s companions (six of them) go with him. This becomes larger than just Peter and Cornelius and starts to involve others, who had not seen the visions, becoming part of God’s plan to bring Jews and Gentiles together—just as Peter is hoping that those to whom he is relating this story will become a part of God’s plan. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

11:12 Six brothers represent twice the number of witnesses needed to establish testimony (Mt 18:19–20). (TLSB)

11:13-14 The angel’s message shows what the visions are truly about: not just eating or fellowship but *salvation* itself (*sōthēsēi*) to Cornelius and his household! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

11:14 *you and all your household.*† Not only the family, including any children, but also slaves and employed individuals under Cornelius’s authority (see note on Ge 6:18). (CSB)

11:15 The connection of the Spirit’s work here to what had happened to them “at the beginning” at Pentecost is perhaps the clincher in Peter’s defense. How can one argue

with the work of the Spirit? (Note that Peter uses the same verb, *diakrinanta*, in v 12 when he says he did not contend with or doubt the Spirit but went along with his working.) If the Spirit had worked in and through the first believers at Pentecost, couldn't he also work here? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

11:16-17 The remembrance of Baptism and the Spirit bringing to life is significant. We ought not look for miraculous dreams now, but rather to that way God has promised to work through water and the Word. Such a “common” occurrence as a Baptism is no less miraculous than the events of these chapters of Acts. The same Spirit works in all to give the same gift of faith. Peter’s final question of himself elicits the final response of his hearers in v 17: “who was I that I could stand in God’s way?” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

11:16 Peter comments on what went through his mind during the events of 10:44–48. Pentecost was the fulfillment of this prophecy about Baptism and the Spirit (ch 2). (TLSB)

11:17 GOD GAVE THE SAME GIFT – God withheld neither the gift of grace nor the Holy Spirit from the Gentiles. Peter, having seen Christ’s ministry, death, and resurrection, was also an eyewitness of the Gentiles’ receiving of the Holy Spirit through the proclamation of the Gospel. (TLSB)

oppose God. Peter could not deny the Gentiles the invitation to be baptized (10:47) and to enjoy full fellowship in Christ with all believers. The Jewish believers were compelled to recognize that God was going to save Gentiles on equal terms with Jews. By divine action rather than by human choice, the door was being opened to Gentiles. (CSB)

11:18 *repentance unto life.* † A change of one’s attitude, which leads to a turning from sin to God and results in eternal life (see note on 2:38).

It means that a mission by Jews to Gentiles can begin because, as Peter has seen, God has removed the social barrier between Jews and Gentiles. It is a breakthrough not simply because Peter and the Jerusalem church now accept Gentiles for baptism but also because they recognize the right of Jewish Christians to freely associate with Gentiles in the course of their mission. (Tannehill)

The response is one of faith. They stop speaking their own words and thoughts and became “silent,” *hēsuchasan*, until the response of faith came out as praise. They realized that the call to repentance and life came also from God to these Gentiles. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

11:1–18 Through the Law, God condemns all sinners and drives them to repentance; through the Gospel, He grants life everlasting. Live a life of daily repentance, and glorify God for His lavish blessings and gifts to you and all people. • Lord, let our likeness to some not be a barrier to others. Draw everyone to You, O Holy Spirit, even the unlikely. Amen. (TLSB)

SECOND READING – Revelation 21:1-7

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” ⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” ⁶ He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son

21:2–22:5† The “Holy City” combines elements of Jerusalem, the tabernacle, the temple and the Garden of Eden. See Isa 66:22; 2Pe 3:13; Gal 4:25–26; Heb 12:22. (CSB)

The conclusion to the entire prophetic message of Revelation is the vision of “a new heaven and a new earth” (21:1). At the end of the first world, John had seen the judgment of the harlot and the beast (17:1–18:24), the marriage feast of the Lamb and the second coming of the Lord Christ (19:1–21). Then he saw a flashback of the binding of the dragon at Christ’s first advent, followed by the millennium (20:1–6), the loosing of the dragon for the battle of Gog and Magog just before the End (20:7–10), and the resurrection and the judgment of human race (20:11–15). John is now prepared to see *beyond* the end of the first world to the creation of “a new heaven and a new earth” (21:1). (CC p. 591)

In 20:11, as God on his throne held the last judgment, “the earth and the heaven fled” from his face “and a place was not found for them.” This suggests that the present heaven and earth originally created by God (Gen 1:1) would not be a fit home for his resurrected and righteous saints. Under the judgment of God because of the sin of the human race, the earth was cursed and thus suffered decay and ruin (Gen. 3:17-19; 5:29; cf. Is. 24:5-6; Rom. 8:20). But as Isaiah had prophesied (65:17), God says, “Behold, I am creating a new heaven and a new earth,” and “the former things,” that is, the former heaven and earth and all the travail therein, “will not be remembered and will not arise in the mind.” And then Isaiah (65:20–25) describes existence and life in the new heaven and new earth. He tells how God’s people will build houses and plant vineyards in peace and how the wolf and the lamb will eat together, and he speaks of the longevity of human life. The words of Isaiah seem to be an apt metaphorical description of the spiritual life on the present earth that God will bring about at the advent of the Messiah. But this description, in turn, by way of the messianic reign here on earth, is also a typological picture of life in the new heaven and new earth after the judgment and resurrection at this present world’s end. And according to Isaiah (66:22) this new heaven and new earth will endure forever before God as his own people will live forever. (CC p. 591)

21:1 NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH – Finally, the revelation of a perfectly restored creation is described. (TLSB)

First heaven ... passed away. This fulfills the prediction Jesus makes in Mt 24:35. Also, Rm 8:19–21 suggests that there is continuity between the new creation and that which it replaces. However, certain things truly disappear: sin, death, and corruption. That which has been redeemed is transformed. (TLSB)

Pseudepigrapha also speak of the new heaven and earth. For example, according to 1 Enoch 45:4–6 the Lord declares that on the day of judgment he will “transform the earth and make it a blessing,” and only God’s chosen righteous ones and not sinners will dwell in it. 1 Enoch 72:1 refers to a “new creation” that would be “created” and would abide forever. And 1 Enoch 91:16–17 promises that “the first heaven shall depart and pass away,” and “a new heaven shall appear,” and there shall be “goodness and righteousness, and sin shall no more be heard of forever.” In 4 Ezra 7:75, 88–99 a reference is made about God’s people at rest in death until God renews the creation. And 2 Baruch 32:6 says that God “the Mighty One will renew his creation.” This refrain is also voiced in Jubilees 1:29, which says that in “the new creation,” “the heaven and earth and all of their creatures shall be renewed.” (CC)

God’s promise of “a new heaven and a new earth” is found in 2 Pet 3:10–13, where the apostle reminds his hearers that the present heaven “will pass away” (παρελεύσονται) with “a loud crash” (ροιζηδόν), and the “elements” (στοιχεῖα) will burn and be destroyed, and the earth will be laid bare. The Lord Christ during his earthly ministry asserted that the present “heaven and earth will pass away.” (Mt. 24:35; cf. Mt. 5:18; Mk. 13:31; Lk. 21:33) Though he did not describe the new heaven and earth, he did refer to the transcendent quality of the life to come (e.g., Lk 20:34–36), which will be in “paradise” (Lk 23:43). The apostle Paul, while not speaking directly of a new heaven and earth, seems to imply such when in 1 Cor 15:35–42 he speaks of the differing bodies (σάρξ, σώματα) of earthly creatures and of the differing glory (δόξα) of the sun and moon and stars as indicative of the surpassing glory of human bodies that die and are raised in the resurrection. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.36.1, makes an explicit comparison between the new heaven and earth and the resurrected body of man when he writes that as man is new in the resurrection, so there will be a new heaven and a new earth, and in this new heaven and earth resurrected man will remain. (CC p. 592)

Here in Rev 21:1 John sees “a new heaven and a new earth” which take the place of “the first heaven and the first earth.” But he gives no description of the passing away of the present heaven and earth (see 2 Pet 3:10–13) and no description of the new, except to say “the sea is no longer” (Rev 21:1). What is meant by “the sea”? Does this refer to the physical bodies of waters on our present earth? Or is “the sea” to be understood as the chaos that separates the human race from God? While either interpretation could be received, the former might present some difficulty, for it could suggest that in the new creation there will be no bodies of water, such as oceans and lakes. For that reason “the sea” in 21:1 seems to represent the chaos caused by sin and the fearful gulf that separates God and humanity resulting from human sin

and rebellion against God. In the OT at times “the sea” is a terrifying embodiment of the violent tumult that exists between people and God, and between humans. (E.g., Gen 49:4; Ps. 65:8; 93:3-5; Is 57:20; cf. Eph. 4:14; Jude 13; Rev. 15:2) The sea lends itself toward such a portrayal because to ancient people it held a terror, especially when its boiling waves threatened and often times destroyed human life (e.g., Ps 107:23–30). In the early stage of creation “the waters” were associated with the darkness and the primeval formlessness and chaos (Gen 1:2). The sea is home to the evil serpent (Amos 9:3), Leviathan. (Is. 27:1; Ps. 74:14; 104:26; Job 41:1/40:25; cf. Rev. 13:1-10) In the earthly ministry of Jesus too, the sea was a threat to the apostles, a threat which Jesus conquered (e.g., Mt 8:24–27; 14:24–33). Jonah’s rescue from the sea (Jonah 2) is indicative of Christ’s resurrection from the dead (Mt 12:39–41). (CC p. 593)

NO LONGER ANY SEA – Symbolically conveys that everything threatening and evil is removed. (TLSB)

καὶ ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι—Codex Alexandrinus (A) has καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν οὐκ εἶδον ἔτι, “and the sea I saw no longer,” a variant that most likely is not original, but which is interesting nonetheless. It suggests that John had seen “the sea” earlier—perhaps the sea before God’s heavenly throne in 4:6, which represented the separation between God and humanity, the sea in 12:18–13:1 out of which Satan conjures up the beast to attack the church, and/or the sea mixed with fire in 15:2, which was the place of the spiritual warfare between the saints of God on earth and the beast. θάλασσα appears twenty-six times in Revelation, usually in reference to the physical sea on the earth. But especially in 4:6; 12:18; 13:1; and 15:2, it has spiritual significance. (CC p. 588)

Whether one takes “the sea” here in Rev 21:1 to refer to literal bodies of water or as the symbol of spiritual evil—or both—certainly what is *not* present in the new heaven and earth is what the sea in Scripture represents: its terrifying dread and the chaos and gulf that separates mankind and God because of mankind’s sin and rebellion. “The Sea has disappeared, because in the mind of the writer it is associated with ideas which are at variance with the character of the New Creation.” “The sea is the primeval ocean, symbol of chaos; its disappearance is assurance of God’s total victory.” (CC p. 593)

Lenski questions whether there will be a physical sea because “the function of the sea (ocean) will no longer be needed to supply evaporation, clouds, rain, rivers, and springs, so that men and animals and plants may have the water they need.” However, such an interpretation does not take into consideration the fact that the earth in its sinless, pristine condition *did* have the sea (Gen 1:9–10). If the new heaven and earth is the renewed and restored present heaven and earth and is thus patterned after the original, there may well be waters collected together into bodies of waters and seas, just as the first earth had (Gen 1:9–10; cf. Job 38:8; Ps 95:5). But the sea in its storm-tossed, boiling rage, and as the symbolical domain of the primeval serpent, will no longer be present. That is, even if an ocean were physically present in the new earth, it would not have its terror and fearful character, for *that* sea has passed away. In the new heaven and earth the sea will be calm and at peace (cf. Mk 4:35–41; 6:45–52). Thus calmed, such a

sea will never again remind God's people of the fearful gulf that once separated them from God's holy presence. (CC pp. 593-594)

In pseudepigraphal literature, the sea and its terror were envisioned as passing away. For example, in the Testament of Moses (10:6), when God comes at the End in judgment, "the sea all the way to the abyss will retire." This will happen at the same time that the sun will be darkened and the moon will be made to flee and turned into blood (Testament of Moses 10:5). Similarly the Sibylline Oracles (5:155–61, 447) say that in the destruction of the cosmos at the End the sea will be burned up and dried. This same theme of the waters being dried up in the judgment at the End is referred to in the Testament of Levi (4:1). (CC p. 594)

Elsewhere in Revelation "the sea" does appear as a symbol which reminds the saints of God still here on the present earth of the separation between God and his fallen creation. As such a symbol it is also used to depict the arena of the horrible warfare that the dragon and his minions wage against the church militant. In Rev 4:6 John sees a "sea" before God's heavenly throne which in appearance was like crystal clear glass. That sea was a gentle reminder to John of his present separation: though a saint of God, he was still on his earthly pilgrimage and not yet elevated to God's holy presence in heaven. John does *not* see that glassy sea in the new heaven and earth, for in the recreated earth, he and God's people will never again be separated from their Creator and Lord. In 13:1 one of the beasts called forth by Satan, the dragon, comes from the sea to terrorize the woman of Revelation 12, the church. And in 15:2 the "glassy sea mixed with fire" depicts the field of warfare here on earth, upon which takes place the awesome conflict between God's people and one of the beasts of the dragon—a warfare that continues throughout the entire NT era from Christ's ascension to his second coming. This "sea" John does *not* see in the new heaven and earth, for it is no longer present. (CC pp. 594-595)

Isaiah uses a symbol of a quiet and peaceful sea when he prophetically describes the messianic age. In Is 11:9, when speaking of how the earth will be full of the knowledge of Yahweh and danger no longer will exist, he says that the fullness of divine knowledge will be like waters covering the sea. Similarly Hab 2:14 states that when the earth is "filled with the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh," it will be like waters covering the sea. Both prophets, by way of analogy, are saying that the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth in the same way that waters cover or fill the sea, representing the righteousness and peace of God which according to Isaiah (11:1–10) the Branch of Jesse will bring. It might be conjectured that any physical bodies of water in the new heaven and earth would also be reminders that the righteousness and the glory of God in Christ will fill the newly recreated earth (cf. Rev 22:1), while at the same time the sea, which once reminded God's people of agony and suffering in the conflict with the old evil foe, is now gone forever. (CC p. 595)

The absence of "the sea" from the new heaven and earth in the context of 21:1–8 suggests not the absence of water in the geophysically renewed earth, but the absence of any of the fear and terror that the sea evoked, and especially the absence of any painful reminder that God's saints had once been separated from him. Nor will there be any vestiges of the mortal conflict and all its attending sufferings that the devil and the forces of evil caused the people of God to undergo.

So while John did see the sea before God's heavenly throne in 4:6 from the viewpoint of a saint on earth still suffering the warfare, now in 21:1 as he views the new heaven and earth, "the sea is no longer." (CC p. 595)

21:2 NEW JERUSALEM – Because this city is explicitly identified with the "bride," it is best taken as representing the collective people of God (see note, 19:7–8). See "Zion," p 844. Luth: "God's house is found where God dwells with us, where we are the household, yes, the sons and daughters, and He Himself is our Father, who speaks and deals with us and brings it about in the most intimate way that the church is also the gate of heaven. For He dwells with us in order that we may enter into the kingdom of heaven. And, what is most delightful, He comes first and appears to us on the ladder. He descends and lives with us. He speaks and works in us" (AE 5:250). (TLSB)

Viewing the new heaven and new earth, John's attention immediately is drawn not to a physical description of the new heaven and earth but to "the holy city, new Jerusalem ... coming down out of heaven from God" (21:2). This "new Jerusalem" is not the old historic city of the present earth restored. Rather it comes "from God," for God is its "architect and builder" (Heb 11:10), and it is the city where God dwells with his people (Heb 12:22), and it will remain forever (Heb 13:14). In the letter to the church of Philadelphia (Rev 3:7–13), a blessing is pronounced upon those who remain faithful, for the Son of Man is "coming quickly" (3:11) and he "will write upon [his faithful] the name of [his] God and the name of the city of [his] God—the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from [his] God" (3:12). In Gal 4:25–26 Paul contrasts the earthly city Jerusalem of his day with "the new Jerusalem above," which is the heavenly city that is free (by grace) and that is the "mother" of Christians, who are the true heirs of Abraham by means of the covenant fulfilled in Christ (cf. Heb 12:22). The "new Jerusalem" here in Rev 21:2 is described as "prepared like a bride adorned for her husband." Similarly Isaiah speaks prophetically of Jerusalem or Zion as the bride of Yahweh. In chapters 54 and 60 he describes how the city of Jerusalem will be rebuilt (Is 54:11–12; 60:10–14) and thus will radiate the glory of God (Is 60:1–5). The city represents God's faithful people, who are identified as the bride of Yahweh (Is 54:4–8; 60:15–16, 21; cf. 62:1–12). (CC pp. 595-596)

bride. See note on 19:7. (CSB)

κεκοσμημένην τῷ ἀνδρὶ αὐτῆς—The dative could be that of the *agent* of the passive participle, "adorned *by* her husband," but normally in the ancient Near East a groom would not help prepare the bride for the ceremony; her family and attendants would carry out that role (cf. 19:8). Therefore this is more likely the dative of advantage, "adorned *for* her husband." Nevertheless, *theologically*, it is in fact *Christ* who *does* adorn and prepare his church to be his bride (Eph 5:25–27). Rev 21:11 will explain that what adorns the bride is "the glory of God," which is God's gift to her in Christ (cf. Jn 1:14; 2:11; 17:22, 24). (CC pp. 588-589)

Already in Rev 19:7–8 John had seen the church, the bride of the Lamb, adorned and made ready to be received by her Lord. Now she is revealed to John in all her heavenly attire as the holy city, the new Jerusalem. In Ezek 16:1–14 the prophet graphically portrays how God

adorned Jerusalem as his bride, and though she prostituted herself to alien gods (Ezek 16:15–58), God would make atonement for her and she again would belong to her rightful Lord (Ezek 16:59–63). Here in Revelation 21 John sees the end result of the redemption of the bride of God, now spoken of as the bride of Christ. In all her godly beauty, as portrayed by the holy city Jerusalem, she will forever remain in God’s holy presence. (CC p. 596)

21:3 Scripture repeatedly underscores that one of the greatest blessings of the new heavens and new earth is that restored mankind will again behold God face-to-face and live in His immediate presence (cf 22:3–5; 1Co 13:12). (TLSB)

VOICE FROM THE THRONE – In the new heaven and earth God will tabernacle (dwell) with his bride, his people (21:3). In 21:3–4 John gives a description of what it will be like for them when God takes up his abode among them. To introduce this description John hears “a loud voice from the throne” (21:3). As often elsewhere in Revelation, the actual living source of the voice is not identified. Sometimes an object is named as the source or direction from which the voice comes: one of the corners of the heavenly incense altar (9:13); heaven itself (10:4; 12:10; 14:13; 18:4); the temple or sanctuary of God in heaven (16:1, 17); or God’s heavenly throne (16:17; 19:5; 21:3). In 16:17 both the temple and the throne together are mentioned. (CC p. 596)

Whatever source might be named, the voice expresses the majesty and holiness and glory of the ultimate living source, God himself. Because at times an angel speaks for God (5:2; 6:6–7; 7:2; 14:6–7; 18:1–2), it may well be that it is also an angel who actually speaks when only a voice is mentioned. When some object is named, such as the furnishings in the heavenly temple, that may emphasize that the source is not only God, *but the God who has bound himself to his people in an incarnational and sacramental way*—in Christ, who is the new temple, and in divine worship, when God comes to his people through his Word and Sacraments. Thus, naming the altar as the source of the voice would suggest that the one who provided atonement for sin and who hears and receives the prayers of his saints is the living source of the voice. Naming heaven as the source of the voice might suggest that the one who is adored by the heavenly hosts is the source, while naming the temple could suggest that the one who dwells among his people through his covenant of grace in Christ is the source. And naming the throne might suggest that the one who rules his people as their only King and Lord is the source. Here in 21:3 (as elsewhere) it may be an angel who is speaking, even though only “the throne” of God is mentioned. Even if it is an angel who is speaking, he is doing so for God and under God’s authority, that is, by and under the authority of the royal Lord, who alone is the object of the worship of all creation in the new heaven and earth (see 19:4; cf. 19:10; 22:8–9). (CC pp. 596-597)

The voice cries out, “Behold, the tabernacle [ἡ σκηνή] of God is with men” (21:3). In 15:5 John saw in heaven “the sanctuary of the tabernacle of the testimony” (ὁ ναὸς τῆς σκηνῆς τοῦ μαρτυρίου) of God. It was opened and from it came the seven censer-angels who would mediate the third and last vision of events on earth (16:1–21). There the tabernacle was associated with the judgments of God upon the human race as portrayed in chapter 16. Here in

21:3 the tabernacle is associated with God's glorious and gracious presence with his people in the new heaven and earth. The OT tabernacle erected by Moses (Ex 26:1–37) was the visible location of God's covenantal presence with his people. But the tabernacle here in Rev 21:3 is not the restoration of the earthly tabernacle of Moses, for there is no material tabernacle or sanctuary in the new Jerusalem, since the Lord God himself and the Lamb are the sanctuary (21:22). (CC p. 597)

dwelling of God. See Lev 26:11–12; Eze 37:27; 2Co 6:16. (CSB)

θρόνου—The majority of manuscripts, in particular the Byzantine family, have οὐρανοῦ, “heaven,” instead of θρόνου, “throne.” But since codex Alexandrinus (A) and others (e.g., codex Sinaiticus [κ]) have θρόνου, it is the better reading. Either reading indicates that the source of the voice was from heaven and was by the authority of God. (CC p. 589)

God's heavenly tabernacle here in 21:3 in the vision of the new heaven and earth *signifies* the actual presence of God with his people. But when the new heaven and earth will actually be created, no visual tabernacle will be present. Its presence will not be necessary, *for God's actual and personal presence among his people, which was represented by the tabernacle in the OT and which the tabernacle represents here in John's vision of the new heaven and earth, will have become a permanent reality.* But here in 21:3 John sees the presence of God in the vision of the new heaven and earth still dwelling in the tabernacle, because it is still in the future and John is here on earth in the present age (cf. Heb 9:1–22). As the tabernacle, and later the temple, were typological, mediating structures that enabled the holy God to dwell among sinful people, and those structures were part of the sacrificial worship that provided typological atonement for sin, in the eschaton all that will remain of all this is the Lamb who once was slain (Rev 21:22). (CC pp. 597-598)

God himself will dwell directly and personally with his people as visually represented by the tabernacle as a result of the covenant that he had made with them through the Lamb. The statement that “they themselves will be his people, and God himself will be with them [as their God]” (21:3) has its roots in the OT. Already in Lev 26:11–12 God promised that he would place his dwelling place (יָדְשֶׁנִּי, “my tabernacle, dwelling”; LXX: τὴν διαθήκην, “the covenant”) with his people, and as a result he would walk among them as their God and they would be his people. The tabernacle served as an archetype of this dwelling of God. In Jer 31:33 the prophet declares that through Yahweh's covenant, he will be his people's God and they will be his people. In Ezek 37:27 God prophesied that he would place his dwelling (יָדְשֶׁנִּי; LXX: κατασκήνωσις) with the people and he would be their God and they his people (cf. Jer 30:32; Hos 2:23; Zech 8:8). (CC p. 598)

The use of the verb σκηνώσει (future tense of σκηνώω, “to dwell, to tent”) in Rev 21:3 is a pointed reminder of Jn 1:14, where the same verb is in the aorist tense for *completed* action: “The Word [ὁ λόγος] became flesh and *dwelt* [ἔσκηνωσεν] among us.” Jesus Christ is the incarnation of the glory of Yahweh, in and through whom God dwells among his people. He is the new tabernacle, the new temple, the means of atonement and the place of the forgiveness

of sins, the one who reconciles the holy God with sinful human beings (Mt 26:61; Jn 2:19; cf. Rev 21:22). And this will be manifestly evident and realized in the new heaven and earth. (CC p. 598)

21:4 *wipe every tear.*† See 7:17; Isa 25:8; Jn 16:20. (CSB)

Note that John describes heaven by way of negation, (i.e., in terms of what will not be there: tears, death, crying, or pain). Such a description is fitting, given that we have no experience of anything as fantastic as the new heavens and new earth (cf 1Co 2:9). (TLSB)

In Rev 21:4 the blessed benefits of God dwelling with his people in the new heaven and earth are described. Though given in negative terms, they are telling in their implications. “Abolished forever are the debilitating effects of sin. Sorrow, death, mourning, and pain are all part of the ‘first things’ which are now past and gone.” Perhaps the blessed state of life with God in the new heaven and earth is given in negative terms because it is easier for those still here in the present earth to understand what is being replaced, while the positive realities of heavenly existence transcend human comprehension. God “will wipe away every tear from [the] eyes” of the saints. No longer will weeping characterize the condition of God’s people as in the present life of tribulation. (See Job 16:16; Ps. 6:6or 7; Mt. 5:4; Lk. 19:41; Jn. 11:33-35; Acts 20:19) As the psalmist (126:5–6) says, “Those who sow in tear[s] will reap with a song of joy, and he who now goes about weeping ... will return with a song of joy” (cf. Is 35:10). For God himself promised of old that when he would rejoice over Jerusalem and dwell in a state of happiness with his people, never again would they shed tears (Is 61:2–3; 65:19). For God would destroy death and as a result would “wipe away the tear[s]” from all the faces of his people (Is 25:8). Already in Rev 7:17 John had seen the blessed state of the souls of the saints in heaven, the church triumphant, whose tears had been wiped away. Now here in 21:4 John hears this description of God’s people *after* the resurrection in the state of eternal life in the new heaven and earth. (CC pp. 598-599)

The awareness of sin against God and its attending sufferings is a major cause of tears in the condition of repentance (Is 22:12; Joel 2:12; Mk 14:72), and such tears flow openly in the face of death. (Lk. 7:11-13; 8:49-52; Jn. 11:32-25; 20:11-15; Acts 9:36-39) But in the new heaven and earth all sin and its guilt are forever gone, and the last enemy, death, has been destroyed (Rev 20:14). So John hears the great voice saying, “And death shall no longer be, nor sorrow nor crying nor pain shall be ever again” (21:4). That was promised, for example, in Hos 13:14: “From the hand of the grave I will deliver them, and from death I will ransom them” (cf. Ps 49:14 [MT 49:15]; Is 25:8). This promise the apostle Paul reiterates as he sees it accomplished and realized in Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:20–26, 53–57), and thus the apostle cries out, “Death has been swallowed up into victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” (1 Cor 15:54–55). And then, as a confirming statement that death indeed has been forever destroyed, John hears the great voice saying, “because the first things have passed away” (Rev 21:4). All the things of the first creation are gone, gone because they were corrupted and twisted out of their original godly purpose (see Gen 3:14, 16–19; cf. Rom 8:18–22). Their

corruption resulted in death (Gen 3:19), and because death is now gone forever, so also are all the “first things.” (CC p. 599)

PASSED AWAY – τὰ πρῶτα ἀπῆλθαν—Instead of this phrase, codex Sinaiticus (κ) has a rather strange reading: τὰ πρόβατα ἀπῆθεν, “the sheep passed away.” If this variant reading were to be taken seriously, it might be understood to mean that there would no longer be death, sorrow, and so on, because the sheep, that is, God’s people, have passed away from all the pain and sorrow. Though this is a possible, attractive thought, the reading in codex κ seems to be a scribal error in which the scribe read ΠΡΩΤΑ in the text from which he was copying as if it were ΠΡΟΒΑΤΑ. (CC p. 589)

21:5 ON THE THRONE – ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ—While elsewhere this phrase is constructed in the dative (4:9; 5:13; 7:10; 19:4), it is also found in the genitive (ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου, 4:10; 5:1, 7; 6:16; 7:15) and in the accusative (ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον, 4:2). The preposition ἐπὶ can govern all three cases and each case could have its own distinct nuance. But probably in Revelation there is no difference in meaning, for all are used in reference to a person on a throne. (CC p. 589)

In 21:5 for only the second time in Revelation God the Father (here “the One sitting on the throne”) speaks in the first person. In the prologue (1:1–8) in 1:8 God the Father spoke directly in the first person. But since that time and hitherto throughout the prophetic message of Revelation the presence on the throne has spoken only through intermediaries. Now for the first time in the prophetic message proper God speaks directly. To whom does he speak? Since in 21:6 “and he said” (καὶ εἶπεν) appears with “to me” (μοι), John is the one who is addressed. (CC p. 600)

ALL THINGS NEW – The new creation has already begun to appear through the preaching of the Gospel and the work of the Spirit. However, it will not be completed until the day of Christ’s return. (TLSB)

And God said, “Behold, I make all things new!” (21:5). It is a creative word, a spoken word by which God creates. In Genesis 1 several times it is written, “And God said” (וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים; LXX: καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός). After each “And God said” there follows the word he actually spoke: “Let there be light” (Gen 1:3); “Let there be a firmament” (Gen 1:6); and so on. By these words God created in each case what his words described. Here in Rev 21:5 after “And God said” there follows a word by which he creates, only this time it refers to the *new* creation, the heaven and earth being recreated, restored after “the first things have passed away” (21:4). It is quite fitting that the first time God speaks in the prophetic message of Revelation it should be his creative word by which he will make his original creation new. (CC p. 600)

The words “Behold, I make all things new” (ἰδοὺ καινὰ ποιῶ πάντα, 21:5) are similar to those in the LXX text of Is 43:19, “behold, I make new things” (ἰδοὺ ποιῶ καινά). In Isaiah these words have to do with the mercy that God will show to Israel (Is 43:14–21). Here in Rev 21:5 the words are spoken with regard to all things being restored, “the renovation of the universe,” the final and end result of God’s mercy in Christ. For “new” (καινά) points to the adjectives “new” (καινόν,

καινήν) which describe the “heaven” (οὐρανόν) and “earth” (γῆν) in 21:1. For God’s assertion that he will “make all things new” (21:5) refers to all that God had originally created, “the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1), which are transformed into the “new heaven” and “new earth” that John sees here in Revelation 21. The Lord God had promised long before the time of John through the prophet Isaiah (65:17; 66:22) that he would create “new [ΔΨΤΠ; LXX: καινός/καινή] heavens and a new earth.” *To “make all things new” (Rev 21:5) thus means that all things that God had originally created will be recreated and restored to their original pristine state.* “On a cosmic scale ... a totally new order will replace the old order marred by sin.” God will not annihilate the present creation, cast it out as some trash, but rather he will, by recreation, transform the old into the new. (CC pp. 600-601)

THESE WORDS ARE TRUSTWORTHY AND TRUE – οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοὶ εἰσιν—Some manuscripts (mostly of the Byzantine family) add τοῦ θεοῦ after ἀληθινοί, thus making certain that the reader and hearers understood why “these words are faithful and true,” because they are “of God.” (CC p. 589)

“And he says, ‘Write, because these words are faithful and true’ ” (21:5). Who is the speaker of these words? Commentators are not in agreement. Some suggest that it is now an angel, and others say that it is still God himself.³⁷ It is because of the change from “he said” (εἶπεν) to “he says” (λέγει) in 21:5 and then back again to “he said” (εἶπεν) in 21:6 that it is postulated that the speaker is an angel. This interpretation suggests that an angel (speaking on behalf of God) interposes with the word “write” (γράψον). Four other times with regard to the prophetic message of Revelation the command is given to John, “Write”—all with the aorist imperative form, γράψον (1:11, 19; 14:13; 19:9). In the first two instances (1:11, 19) it is the exalted Son of Man, Jesus Christ, who tells John to write. In 14:13 and in 19:9 an unidentified voice, though most likely an angel speaking on behalf of God, tells John to write. In 19:9 the voice tells (λέγει) John, “These are the true words of God.” Here also in 21:5 John is told that the “words are ... true,” but with the addition that they are also “faithful.” This similarity in content to what the voice in 19:9 says could suggest that here also in 21:5 it is an angel who is speaking. But it is a little difficult to imagine that an angel would interrupt with his own voice while God is speaking directly to John. However, it could be that the same angel who has been attending John (17:1; 19:9–10; 22:8) throughout the conclusion (17:1–22:5) speaks to John *while God is speaking* to remind him that these are indeed the true and faithful words of God and that these words of God are to be written down for the sake of the church (as with the seven letters to the seven churches). (CC p. 601)

Whatever the actual source of the voice, John is explicitly told to “write,” for “these words are faithful and true.” In 19:9 the words that are “the true words of God” were the words that described the celebration at the marriage feast of the Lamb (19:5–10). The final time that John hears it said that “these words are faithful and true” is in 22:6, in the epilogue, where the “words” refer to the entire message of Revelation. Here in 21:5 they refer first of all to that which is said about the new heaven and the new earth and how God makes all things new. These words of God are certain and cannot be negated. They *will* be fulfilled, for God is ever faithful to his Word. (See Deut. 6:4; 7:9; Ps. 117; Is. 43:10-13, 15, 25; 1 Cor. 1:9; Heb. 6:17-18; 1 Peter 4:19)

Without question there will be a new heaven and earth. And as was already prophesied by Isaiah (66:22), the new heaven and earth will last *forever*—as will God’s people in them. (CC pp. 601-602)

21:6 IT IS DONE – Echoes Jn 19:30. In that context, Jesus is pronouncing that redemption has been won. Here, God announces that the final restoration has been completed. (TLSB)

γέγοναν—This is the perfect tense of γίνομαι, “to become, be, happen, take place,” with the aoristic ending of the third person plural, -αν, instead of the normal perfect ending of the third person plural, -ασι(v). (CC p. 589)

In Rev 21:6 God speaks again to John and tells him, “It has come into being.” The verb γέγοναν is the perfect indicative active of γίνομαι, “to become, happen, come to pass, come into being.” All that God has spoken of regarding the making of all things new and regarding the restoration of the new heaven and earth has come about. All is now done. It is done. There is nothing to be added. As John sees it in this visionary prophetic message, the Lord Christ *has already come* (19:11–21), the resurrection and the final judgment *have taken place* (20:11–15), and the heavens and the earth *have been made new* and thus restored to their original pristine condition. Yet for John and God’s saints still here on the present earth, this is still all in the future—even though John now in the prophetic vision sees it all as an accomplished fact. Nevertheless, in their regeneration through faith, God’s people have the assurance of the fulfillment of what is yet to take place (cf. 2 Cor 3:18; 4:16–18; 5:16–17). God on his heavenly throne can now say that everything is accomplished because his Son, Jesus Christ, completed the work of restoring God’s people by the shedding of his blood (Rev 5:9–10). The completion of the salvation of God’s people was attested when Jesus cried out from the cross, “It is finished” (τετέλεσται, Jn 19:30). This work completed at his death was visibly demonstrated by his resurrection (Rev 1:17–18). Now in John’s vision of the new heaven and earth he sees the final action of God, which final action is the result of Christ’s completed work of redemption. Thus all things have been made new. “It is finished” (τετέλεσται). “It has come into being” (γέγοναν). All is accomplished. (CC p. 602)

the Alpha and the Omega. See note on 1:8. (CSB)

The One sitting on the throne, God the Father, continues to speak: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End” (21:6). The first time God called himself “the Alpha and the Omega” was in the prologue (1:8). Now for the second time, here in 21:6 he declares that he is such. And then God adds, “I am ... the Beginning and the End” (ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος). While this addition (which is not present in 1:8) may seem to be a definition and explanation of “the Alpha and the Omega,” the two are not synonymous. For “the Beginning and the End,” while explaining the sense of “the Alpha and the Omega,” does so *inreference to all creation*. That is, it declares that “the Alpha and the Omega” is also “the Beginning and the End” of all creation, of all life (cf. Col 1:13–20; Rev 3:14). While the phrase “the Beginning and the End” is not present with “the Alpha and the Omega” in the prologue (1:8), it is present here in 21:6 *because of the context of the new heaven and earth*. God, “the Alpha and the Omega,” now also calls himself

“the Beginning and the End” of the creation of the new heaven and earth. One more time the combination of “the Alpha and the Omega” and “the Beginning and the End” will appear, in 22:13, where *the Lord Christ* says this of himself. By sharing these titles, the full divinity of Christ and his equality with the Father are affirmed. (CC pp. 602-603)

water of life.† Cf. Ps 36:9; Isa 55:1; Jn 4:14. See 22:1, 17. This symbol obviously portrays the preaching of the gospel. (CSB)

Probably another example of baptismal imagery. Cf 3:4; 6:11; 7:3, 14. (TLSB)

The Alpha and the Omega, that is, the eternal God who gave the prophetic message of Revelation to John through Christ and his angel (1:1–8), now assures John that, as the eternal God who also is the Beginning and the End, he makes all things new. As Paul says in Rom 11:36, “All things [τὰ πάντα] are from him and through him and for him” (cf. 1 Cor 8:6). Therefore the eternal God can now say, “To the one who is thirsty I myself will give from the spring of the water of life freely” (Rev 21:6). These words are reminiscent of the gracious invitation spoken by God through Isaiah (55:1): “Come, all who are thirsty, to the waters ... come, buy wine and milk without money.” In Jer 2:13 God complains that his people have “committed two sins: they have forsaken [him] who is the spring of living water, and they have dug their own wells”—a definition of idolatry. Nevertheless, the gracious invitation prophetically spoken by Isaiah is now fulfilled in Jesus Christ, for in his earthly ministry he said, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me” (Jn 7:37; cf. Jn 4:10–14). Now at the conclusion of the prophetic message of Revelation and in reference to all things made new God reminds John of this invitation, an invitation that John and God’s people heeded, and the fruition of which they now see in the new heaven and earth. In the epilogue (22:6–21) John will once again be reminded of this gracious call to the waters of life given freely (22:17). (CC p. 603)

21:7 *He who overcomes*. Cf. the emphasis on overcoming in the seven letters (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). (CSB)

Recalls the promises appearing in each of the seven letters to the churches (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). (TLSB)

Rev 21:7–8 gives a description of those who will inhabit the new heaven and earth and those who will not. “The one who conquers will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be my son” (21:7). In Revelation 2 and 3, the conclusion of each of the seven letters has a promise from the Lord Christ for “the one who conquers” (ὁ νικῶν). “I will grant [to him] to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” (2:7). He “will certainly never be harmed by the second death” (2:11). “I will give [to him] of the manna which has been hidden, and I will give to him a white stone [of innocence], and upon that stone a new name” (2:17). “I will give to him authority over the nations, and he will shepherd them with an iron rod” (2:26–27). He “will be clothed in white garments, and I will certainly not remove his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels” (3:5). “I will place him as a pillar in the temple of my God ... and I will write upon him the name of my God and the name of the

city of my God—the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God—and my own new name” (3:12). “I will grant to him to sit with me on my throne” (3:21). Taken together, these conclusions of the seven letters to the seven churches are a sevenfold description of the blessed state of those who will live in the new heaven and earth. “The one who conquers” is an heir (21:7) of God’s gift of eternal life in the new heaven and earth *because of the victory of the one who conquered*. For it was the Lamb who conquered (ἐνίκησεν) and by his victory made a people for God (1:5–6; 5:5; 7:14–17)—and because of his victory the saints of God are also called victorious ones (12:11). And as John says elsewhere, “Everyone who has been born of God conquers [νικᾷ] the world, and this is the victory [ἡ νίκη] which has conquered [ἡ νικήσασα] the world, our faith” (1 Jn 5:4). (CC pp. 603-604)

The one who conquers “will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be my son” (Rev 21:7). To be an heir of God is to share in all the blessings that he confers upon his own son. The one who is in Christ, who has been clothed with Christ in Baptism and believes in him as the Savior, becomes such an heir of God, for it is through the righteousness of faith (διὰ δικαιοσύνης πίστεως, Rom 4:13) in Christ that the sinner is adopted as a son of God and so an heir (Rom 4:13; Gal 3:26–29; Titus 3:5–7). Christ Jesus won this inheritance by his suffering and death, and as the heir of God he has made all who are in him children of God and heirs of his glory (Rom 8:17; Gal 3:29). The heir in Christ is acknowledged as God’s son, for God is now his Father. Rev 21:3 promised that when the time comes that God will dwell with his people, “they themselves will be his people, and God himself will be with them [as their God].” Here in 21:7 the people of God are individualized as his heirs. As the Son of God is the heir of God, so each believer in Christ is a son of God as an individual heir. Not only does God in Christ recognize a people as his, he also singles out each one as his own child (see Gal 4:7). (CC p. 604)

GOSPEL – John 16:12-22

12 “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. 13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14 He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. 15 All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. 16 “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.”

16:12-22 In his farewell discourse on Maundy Thursday (John 14–16), Jesus tells the apostles many things that he knows will be difficult for them to understand. He describes himself as the true vine (15:1). He prepares the apostles for the world’s hatred, which first was for him (15:18). He speaks about how he must return to the Father (14:28), but he reassures his apostles that he is not leaving them alone. He is sending the Holy Spirit (16:7). Jesus’ teachings undoubtedly have overwhelmed and confused the disciples. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

16:12-15 Our text is a portion of our Lord’s farewell address to his disciples on the night before his crucifixion. He has already told them he would be going to the Father’s house

(14:2), going to the Father (14:28). He has also reminded them that they could expect severe opposition as his witnesses, opposition to the point of death (15:18–21; 16:2–4). Such talk has filled the disciples with grief (16:22). Jesus knows this and goes out of his way to comfort them. “Do not let your hearts be troubled,” he says (14:1). He offers them his peace (14:27). He promises to send the Counselor (14:26; 15:26). This Counselor is the Holy Spirit. He will be their ultimate comfort as he brings to their remembrance all that Jesus told them, speaking the truth about Jesus and revealing more fully things yet to come. The result will be that their grief will be turned to joy (16:22). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 3)

16:12 I HAVE MUCH MORE TO SAY – Jesus resumed teaching after the resurrection (chs 20–21). (TLSB)

“I have” means that these things are on Jesus’ heart, and that He would like to speak to the disciples about them. “Much” as “composed of a number of items,” indicating these items, “many things.” (Lenski)

Notwithstanding the abundance of the revelations which Christ had given still, He said they had much to learn. (PC)

The dear Lord was eager to strengthen the disciples, to arm them against what would befall them after His departure. (Luther)

more than you can now bear. This may mean “more than you can understand now,” or “more than you can perform without the Spirit’s help” (to live out Christ’s teaching requires the enabling presence of the Spirit). (CSB)

Jesus continues his discourse on the work of the Holy Spirit. This verse has generated various interpretations. Some suggest that the Spirit will impart a more complete revelation in the future, as though Jesus’ divine teaching is incomplete. But one chapter earlier Jesus said that he had revealed to the disciples all he heard from the Father (15:15), contradicting that theory. Leon Morris (*The Gospel according to John*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971] 699) suggests, “There are vistas of truth set before [the disciples] which they cannot as yet enter, but they will enter when the Spirit comes. More probably it refers to their inability, until the Spirit should come, to live out the implications of the revelation.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 5, Part 3)

Over the course of three years Jesus said many things to his disciples and promised that the Holy Spirit “will remind you of everything I have said to you” (14:26). But there is much more to say, more than the disciples can bear at this time. *Bastazein*, “bear”: the basic meaning of this verb is to bear a burden, and in this context it could be translated “endure” or “tolerate” or even “comprehend.” Weighed down with grief and confused in their minds, the disciples simply cannot endure or comprehend further instruction. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 3)

bastazō, “to bear.” The disciples could not understand (bear) what Jesus had been saying at that moment in time, prior to his resurrection. Only after his resurrection, with the help of the Holy Spirit, would the apostles be able to understand Jesus’ words. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

The coming of the Paraclete would be one method of His Divine approach to them for the purpose of consolation and instruction; consequently He does not allow them to suppose that though separated from them by death, He would cease to instruct them. (PC)

Were the disciples ready for what lay ahead? They couldn’t be fully prepared. Jesus could have told them much more, but He stopped then because they would not have been able to bear it. He had said what He could, and still they were confused, as was to become evident. (PBC)

Much more remains to be said, much more Christ would like to tell His disciples, but in their present state of little faith, of immature spirituality, mixed with sorrow and grief over His leaving, they would not be able to grasp, to understand it. Jesus had indeed told His disciples all that they needed for their salvation, and there was and is no need for further arbitrary revelations, no matter from what sources these claim to come. (Kretzmann)

16:13 BUT – Jesus was not going to abandon the disciples to their own foibles. (PBC)

Spirit of truth. See note on 14:17. (CSB)

The Holy Spirit is called the “Spirit of truth.” He speaks the truth because he does not speak on his own but only what he hears from him who is the truth, that is, Jesus, the Son of God. The NIV translation has “into all truth.” But some manuscripts have *en tēi alētheiai pasēi*, “in all the truth.” Lenski favors this reading and states: “‘Into’ would mean entrance, while ‘in’ assumes that the entrance has already been made and that all that is needed is to explore what lies within the circle of the truth. . . . ‘All the truth’ signifies all the saving realities connected with Jesus and his Father” (R. C. H. Lenski, *Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel* [Columbus: Wartburg Press, 1942] 1090). The divine persons in the Trinity are pictured as communicating with each other. Nothing known to one is ever hidden from the other. Both Jesus and the Father send the Spirit. The Spirit’s revelation will include “what is yet to come.” Jesus had spoken of the last days, but the Spirit will further amplify. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 3)

John Marsh comments, “The Spirit will not bring any new truth, as if he were a source independent of the Son. He is not an independent authority, but speaks only what he learns” (*The Gospel of St. John* [New York: Penguin Books, 1968] 538). “All truth” is the truth of the meaning of Jesus’ teaching. It will be fully understood by the disciples only after the crucifixion and resurrection of their teacher and their receipt of the Spirit. The teaching of the Holy Spirit will not be new, as though some essential truth missing from Jesus’ teaching would be revealed to future generations. The Father’s words, spoken by the Son to the first disciples, will be taught to the post-ascension church through the Spirit. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 5, Part 3)

ou gar lalēsei aph' heautou, all' hosa akousei lalēsei, “for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak.” Just as Jesus did not speak or act on his own authority, but said and did what the Father had given him to do (Jn 5:19–20; 7:16–18; 12:49–50), the Holy Spirit does not speak on his own authority, but speaks whatever he hears. *kai ta erchomena anaggelei humin*, “and he will declare to you the things that are to come.” That is to say, the Gospel—the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord—written by the Spirit-led apostles in the apostolic writings and proclaimed by the Christian Church. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

GUIDE – Greek *hodegeo*, from *hodos* (“way, “journey”); to lead, as a travel guide. (TLSB)

hodēgēsei, “to lead, guide.” Again, not leading in general, but to a specific destination—to all truth in Christ. The Spirit is another Paraclete, not a different one! He proclaims only what he hears, but also all that he hears, leaving nothing out. One cannot “play off” the Spirit against the Word (as many today are wont to do)! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

INTO ALL TRUTH – “Into” would mean entrance, while “in” assumes that the entrance has already been made and that all that is needed is to explore what lies within the circle of truth. Thus “in” would apply specifically to the disciples whom Jesus had already so fully instructed. “All the truth” signifies all the saving realities connected with Jesus and His Father. The term is concrete and decidedly definite. (Lenski)

only what he hears. We are not told whether he hears from the Father or the Son, but it obviously does not matter, for the verse stresses the close relationship among the three. (CSB)

Just as Jesus had told them nothing but what came from the Father, so the Spirit would speak only what came from the Father and the Son. And He would tell them things still to come, prophecies they would write down also for us to learn. So God’s truth for us would be revealed. So we too would learn what Jesus’ work has meant and what lies ahead for us and for the world. (PBC)

But the disciples needed further instruction in order to understand the instruction which they had already received from the Master. And this would be provided for by the Spirit of Truth, by the Spirit whose essential function would be the teaching of the truth, the Word of God. He will teach them, serve as their Guide in leading them into the whole truth. He will bring their hearts and minds into the truth, make them familiar with it, let them understand and grasp the truth, have them realize the grace of God in Christ Jesus. And in doing this, the Spirit will not display an arbitrary, independent activity. The relation between the persons of the Godhead is the intimacy of unity and precludes any such possibility. The Spirit can and will lead the believers into all truth, because He will not bring a separate, independent revelation and Gospel, but will speak what He has heard in the council of the Godhead. (Kretzmann)

what is yet to come. Probably means the whole Christian way or revelation (presented and preserved in the apostolic writings), still future at the time Jesus spoke. (CSB)

Not a promise of new revelations, but rather that the disciples would understand how Christ's death and resurrection applied to the Church after Pentecost. The Spirit will lead believers into a clearer understanding of God's truth as they make their way into the future. (TLSB)

16:14 *glory to me*. See note on 1:14. The Spirit draws no attention to himself but promotes the glory of Christ. (CSB)

doxasei, “will glorify”: the Spirit will invest Jesus with dignity, honor, excellence, majesty. Here we have the one purpose of the Spirit. His work is to place Jesus before all people, to present his person and completed work. The entire New Testament, inspired by the Spirit, presents the truth about Jesus, revealing him as the Son of God who became man, died for our sins and rose for our justification. Through the sacred Scriptures the Spirit leads us into the truth, which brings joy and hope. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 3)

doxazō, “to glorify.” The work of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ, who in turn glorifies the Father. *anaggellō*, “to declare.” The repetition emphasizes this aspect of the Holy Spirit's work. Along with bringing glory to Christ, the Holy Spirit works to make him known (14:26; 1 Jn 2:27). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

What is it that is “yet to come” (v 13)? Does this refer to eschatological events which precede the Parousia? Is it a reference to divine fortune-telling for those “filled with the Spirit”? In v 14 Jesus himself clarifies the meaning of vv 12 and 13, for what will be taught will “bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.” “The teaching ministry of the Spirit builds on and develops the teaching ministry of Jesus himself. By making explicit what in Jesus' historical teaching was only implicit, the Spirit will prepare the disciples to face new enemies and seize new opportunities to extend Jesus' mission in the world” (J. Ramsey Michaels, *John: A Good News Commentary* [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983] 269). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 5, Part 3)

doxasei, “to glorify.” A rich word. Note for our purposes here that throughout John, the Father glorifies the Son (8:54; 12:28; 13:31; 17:1–4) and the Son glorifies the Father (13:31; 14:13; 17:1) and this is especially exemplified in martyrdom (12:23; 21:19; *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, third edition, revised and edited by Frederick William Danker [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957, 1979, 2000], 258). The work of the Spirit is to glorify the Son by placing his cross before the eyes of all through the witness-preaching of the apostles. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

What comes from Jesus is also the Father's, so we learn the whole council of God by the Spirit. (PBC)

TAKING FROM WHAT IS MINE – Jesus had received His revelation from the Father, which would now be imparted and explained by the Holy Spirit. (TLSB)

The guarantee of the Spirit's teaching is that He will utter the words of the Triune God as such. "Here He makes the Holy Ghost a preacher, in order that no one shall stand gaping up into heaven (as the flighty spirits and enthusiasts do) and separate Him from the oral Word or ministry of preaching, but know and learn that He wants to be with and in the Word, and through it lead us into all truth, that we have faith in it, and fight therewith, and be kept against all lies and deceit of the devil, and conquer in all tribulations." 71) Thus the Spirit, in the Word, reveals and makes plain the mysteries of God and heaven. And since He is a Spirit of prophecy, He will tell also of things that are to come, that are now coming. The future salvation also belongs to the counsel of God the coming of Christ to judgment, the consummation of the redemption in the Kingdom of Glory. (Kretzmann)

16:15 *All that belongs to the Father is mine.* Cf. 17:10. The three Persons are closely related. (CSB)

BELONGS TO FATHER IS MINE...SPIRIT WILL MAKE IT KNOWN – Lenski states: “This is added in order to shut out the possible wrong thought that what Jesus so emphatically calls ‘mine’ and by which the Spirit will glorify ‘me’ could be something belonging to him exclusively apart from the Father. All the things of Jesus are ‘whatever the Father has’ ” (Lenski, 1092). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 3)

This verse, along with the rest of the pericope, explicates some of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and the inter-relatedness of the three persons. When the Spirit takes what belongs to Jesus and makes it known to the disciples (v 14), the Spirit is making known to them what belongs to the Father, because the Father has given all that is his to his Son. The Spirit will make known to the disciples the Father's Word about his Son. Thus the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all play a part in communicating the truth of salvation to the New Testament church. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 5, Part 3)

The special outpouring of God's Spirit came at Pentecost. To the end of time, people everywhere will continue to benefit through the Word of God inspired by the Spirit. (PBC)

And in regard to all these facts the Spirit will give the proper information. Moreover, in doing so, His work will redound to the glory of the Savior, since the truth which He will reveal He will receive from Christ for the purpose of preaching. By picturing Christ before the eyes and hearts of the believers, the Holy Spirit provides and gives to Christ the glory which is due Him in His capacity as Savior. And in taking His doctrine from the Son, the Spirit incidentally receives His doctrine from the Father, for since they have the Godhead in common, they have also the divine knowledge in common. Jesus here makes a very bold statement, as Luther says, and one that could not be made by any mere man. All that the Father has, He says, is Mine. He not only has charge of it; it is not only in His possession for a short time, but He has absolute power over its disposition, for He and the Father have everything in common. The Spirit has the unlimited fullness of the Godhead to draw from, all in the interest of the believers. That is the work of the Spirit for and in the believers, that He teaches them to know Jesus Christ, the Savior, aright and with ever-increasing clearness. (Kretzmann)

16:4b–15 Christ comforts the disciples by promising to send them the Helper (the Holy Spirit), who will guide them into a deeper understanding of Christ’s Word. Mistakenly, we sometimes think that Jesus’ physical absence places us at a disadvantage. In fact, Jesus is present with us through the witness of the Spirit, who works among us through God’s Word and Sacraments. • O Holy Spirit, through the Word, guide us into all truth. Amen. (TLSB)

16:16 *a little while . . . a little while.* † Few doubt that the first phrase refers to the interval before the crucifixion. But interpretations differ as to whether the second refers to the interval preceding the resurrection or the coming of the Spirit or the second coming of Christ. It seems that the language here best fits the resurrection; cf. v. 22. (CSB)

Christ describes His burial and resurrection. (TLSB)

micron . . . mikron, “a little while . . . a little while.” The first usage doubtlessly refers to Jesus’ death. He had already told the Pharisees (7:33) and his own disciples (13:33) that he must die. The second usage of “a little while” could be referring to the coming of the Spirit (14:23) or perhaps the parousia (14:1–4); however, the second usage should be viewed as referring to the resurrection (v 22). Jesus will be crucified and die, during which time the disciples will not see him, but after “a little while” he will rise from the dead and at that time they will once again see him. Note: Some manuscripts add “because I am going to the Father” at the end of the verse, probably to help in the transition to the disciples’ questioning in v 17. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

The separation is to be short. The first “little while” embraces only a few hours, the afternoon of this very day (Friday); the second “little while” shall be equally short. The change in verbs, first “to behold” and then “to see,” is of no special import. However painful a separation may be, if its duration is short, that is great comfort indeed. (Lenski)

Only a little while it was, only a few short hours, and the Savior would be hidden from the eyes of His disciples in the darkness of the tomb, and they would not be able to behold Him. But then it would again be only a short while, a matter of a few days, when their eyes would be gladdened by His reappearance as their living Savior. (Kretzmann)

The Disciples’ Grief Will Turn to Joy

17 Some of his disciples said to one another, “What does he mean by saying, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,’ and ‘Because I am going to the Father?’” **18** They kept asking, “What does he mean by ‘a little while’? We don’t understand what he is saying.” **19** Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this, so he said to them, “Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me’? **20** I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your

grief will turn to joy. ²¹ A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. ²² So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

16:17 WHAT DOES THIS MEAN - *ti estin touto ho legei hēmin*, “What is this that he says to us.” The disciples were confused by Jesus’ teachings, specifically about what Jesus intended by the words “a little while” and what he meant by the words “going to the Father.” They had yet to grasp the idea of a suffering Messiah who would be put to death and rise again. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

going to the Father. See v. 10. Jesus had not linked this with “a little while,” but the apostles saw them as connected. (CSB)

But the intention of the Lord seems to be to convey also another great truth to their hearts, since He says that He is going to the Father, making this statement the basis for the others. His ascension was but a few days away, after which they would no longer enjoy the comfort of His personal, physical presence; but His return to glory would follow very shortly after that. In either case, and with either intended meaning, the words were full of comfort and cheer for the disciples. (Kretzmann)

16:18 THEY KEPT ON ASKING - *elegon*, “they were saying.” The imperfect tense “kept saying” or “kept asking” implies that the disciples asked one another repeatedly. Jesus was leaving? Where was he going? When would he be back? Yet they were too afraid to bring their questions to Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

WHAT DOES HE MEAN – They are unable to solve the puzzle. The little while sounds so hopeful, but the hope cannot rise as it might because of that other word about going to the Father which sounds like a long, indefinite stay. (Lanski)

But the latter understood nothing of the joyful message. They were aroused from their apathetic dullness only to the extent that they discussed the probable meaning of Christ among themselves. The result of their discussion was that they frankly stated their inability to understand, to know the meaning of, the Master. They were utterly bewildered and alarmed; a dread sense of impending disaster took hold of their hearts. (Kretzmann)

16:19 JESUS SAW - *egnō [ho] Iēsous*, “Jesus knew.” This doesn’t necessarily indicate that Jesus knew what the disciples were thinking by using his omniscience. If the disciples *elegon*, “were saying” (v 18), to each other, Jesus would have been fully aware of what they wanted to ask him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

ARE YOU ASKING – Jesus had no difficulty in knowing what passed between the disciples who whispered to each other. Before the disciples muster up courage to inquire, Jesus Himself states their question. Yet He leaves out the part about going to the Father. He does not intend to solve what seemed like a contradiction or at least a puzzle to the disciples.

This can rest for the time being, for this will soon become clear in a way far better than words can now instruct the disciples, depressed as they are with sorrow. But this about the little while, with all the sweet comfort it contains, He can make plain so that they will, indeed, feel relieved. (Lenski)

Jesus commonly used rhetorical questions as a teaching method. (TLSB)

Jesus was fully aware of the anxious bewilderment and embarrassment of the disciples, and that they were ashamed to ask for an explanation. In His usual kind manner, therefore, He comes to their assistance by stating the difficulty which was agitating their minds. They could not quite become reconciled to the idea of His leaving them and going to the Father, nor did they fully comprehend what was included in these statements, as well as in the others that He should be removed from their sight for a little while and in just as short a space of time be seen of them once more. We have now often heard what it means 'to go to the Father'; which indeed is not a common expression, such as men usually employ and as they generally understand it, but is the language of the Lord Christ and His Christians. That Christ went forth from, or was sent by, the Father means nothing else than that He, the true Son of God from eternity, became a true man, and revealed Himself on earth in human nature, essence, and form, permitted Himself to be seen, heard, and felt, ate, drank, slept, worked, suffered, and died, like any other person. Again, that He goes to the Father, that means that He will be glorified by His resurrection from the dead, that He sits at the right hand of God and reigns with Him in eternity, as eternal, almighty God. For by His coming down or going from the Father He revealed and proved Himself a true, natural man; but by His return to the Father He declares Himself to be true, eternal God, out of God the Father, and thus remains in one person both God and man, and should be thus known and believed. (Kretzmann)

16:20 I TELL YOU THE TRUTH – ESV has truly, truly. KJV has verily, verily. The special seal of verity (the twofold amen) and of authority (“I say to you”) marks the importance of the statement (See 1:51). And this spoken with a clarity that sees the coming hours and days as though they were already past. (Lenski)

weep. The same verb for loud wailing as in 11:33, which carries the idea of deep sorrow and its outward expression. (CSB)

klausete kai thrēnēsete humeis, “you will weep and lament.” This refers to the grief that the disciples would feel at Jesus’ death. While *ho kosmos*, the world, prided itself at how easily it had dispatched Jesus, the disciples would feel the great torment of loss and would mourn the death of their leader. The events would crush their spirits, while the world rejoiced, but, Jesus tells them, “your sorrow will turn into joy.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

The disciples shall sob, with loud unrestrained weeping, *klansete*, yea, they shall wail, utter wailing cries and moans for the dead, *thanasete*. (Lenski)

GRIEF SHALL TURN TO JOY – This does not mean that eventually the sorrow of the disciples shall subside and that in spite of their former grief they shall again become joyful; but that their very grief, i.e., the very thing that plunged them into such excessive grief, shall turn into joy, i.e., into a glorious cause of joy. The identical event shall plunge them into grief and then lift them into joy. (Lenski)

Very impressively Jesus tells the disciples the natural result of His removal from them, especially under such conditions as would soon be evident. They would weep and lament at the bitterness of His Passion, His crucifixion, and His death, while the world, represented by the unbelieving Jews, especially the leaders of the Church, would be filled with joy. But their sorrow-stricken souls would very quickly find wonderful consolation, which would turn their grief into rejoicing. (Kretzmann)

16:21 *A woman giving birth.* Giving birth usually causes both pain and joy (cf. Isa 26:17–19; 66:7–14; Hos 13:13–14). (CSB)

Cf Is 21:3; 26:18–19, where the prophet illustrates Israel’s suffering before deliverance with the image of childbirth. (TLSB)

Like an expectant mother soon to give birth, the disciples were beginning to feel pain at Jesus’ words and would feel it acutely in a short time with His crucifixion and death. But they would see Him alive again, like a newborn baby, and their hearts would swell with joy – so much joy that no one could ever take it away from them. (PBC)

The Lord adds an illustration to show in what way the acuteness and intensity of an overwhelming sorrow will be converted into joyful delight. At the time when the sorrow and pains of the mother are greatest and death itself seems imminent, the crisis is practically past; and with the birth of the child there comes the joy over the safe delivery and over the babe itself, causing the remembrance of the great sorrow to vanish. So the sorrow and pain of the disciples would be very acute and harsh, but with the return of their Master their joy would be all the greater; it would be such a joy as would surpass all human happiness, such a joy as could never be taken from them. (Kretzmann)

16:22 *I will see you again.* As in v. 16, probably a reference to Jesus’ appearances after his resurrection. (CSB)

no one will take away your joy. The resurrection would change things permanently, bringing a joy that cannot be removed by the world’s assaults. (CSB)

Christ’s resurrection brings lasting joy, not just joy for a moment (cf 1Pt 1:3–9). (TLSB)

tēn charan humōn oudeis airei aph’ humōn, “no one will take your joy from you.” The disciples’ joy will never cease because the resurrection is not just one event, but ushers in a new eschatological era, one in which the resurrected Christ himself says, “I am with

you always, to the end of the age” (Mt 28:20). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

Since the time of Pentecost with its wonderful revelation all believers may become partakers of this joy. Sorrow over the death of Christ can no longer affect us; Jesus now comes to us in a spiritual manner, with His Holy Spirit; He reveals all the glories of His salvation to our hearts. The Christians see and know Jesus by faith as the Son of God and their Savior, and are filled with a joy which will continue as long as His presence continues, to the end of time.
(Kretzmann)