

Last Sunday of the Church Year

OLD TESTAMENT – Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

⁹ “As I looked, “thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. ¹⁰ A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened. ¹³ “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. ¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

7:9–10 *thrones ... court.* Daniel next saw a court scene with judgment thrones set up (cf Ps 122:5). (TLSB)

7:9 THRONES WERE SET IN PLACE – Here is the climax of Daniel’s nighttime vision. The succession of earthly kings stopped, and God stepped in, to have the last word. The thrones were set in place because God was about to pronounce judgment. Since the judgment pictured here is the last judgment, it is clear that Daniel’s vision of the fourth beast involves a long time span – beginning with the rise of the Roman Empire and extending to the second coming of Christ. (PBC)

This is an important feature of the vision God gave Daniel. The sea (the political world) and the four beast (four successive world powers) do not have the last word. Daniel was permitted to see that God had placed a limit on their power and influence. In his dream Daniel saw a heavenly courtroom, one that was equipped with thrones, symbols of kingly authority. God will have the last word in history, as He had the first at creation. (PBC)

The thrones themselves will without a doubt have been of rare beauty. The term used is *korse*, the equivalent of the Hebrew *kisse*. This term never means anything less than a seat or settle of a very special type which is reserved for very special occasions and personages, here for “the angelic assessors of the judge.” (Leupold)

Ancient of Days. God. (CSB)

God the Father. (TLSB)

This unusual title, used only here in the Scripture, refers to the mystery that God is eternal. This title contrasts God’s unchanging permanence with the changeableness and instability of all human power structures. The eternal, majestic God was active long before nations and empires appeared on the world scene. Here the Ancient of Days is pictured pronouncing sentence on His enemies and granting a new and splendid kingdom to the Messiah. (PBC)

This is not one who is marked by the infirmities of old age, but one who has evidently lived for a long time. For it is of moment to emphasize that the judge is the Eternal One who has witnessed all the deeds and acts of men and of kingdoms and is, therefore, well able to pronounce an equitable judgment. (Leupold)

CLOTHING... WHITE AS SNOW – HAIR OF HIS HEAD WHITE LIKE WOOL – Whiteness is symbolic of purity, holiness and righteousness, all of which would fit Christ on the last day. The white hair also suggests wisdom and dignity.

It is eminently fitting that the judge of all mankind be Himself free from every taint of the sin for which he must condemn the sinful among mankind, especially the aggregate of their sins. (Leupold)

Symbolizes God's eternity and holiness (cf Is 1:18). (TLSB)

THRONE WAS FLAMING WITH FIRE – This suggests nobility and splendor, as well as something transcendent, mysterious, awesome and even dangerous.

Throne, wheels, and stream (v 10) were all fiery, as was God's appearance on Mount Sinai (Ex 19:16–18). (TLSB)

The vision of God that Daniel was permitted to see was not only a magnificent one, but an awesome one as well. During the centuries of the OT, when God wanted to appear visibly to His people, He usually chose to do so in the form of fire and cloud and smoke. Think of His appearance to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:1ff), or to Israel at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:16–18), or to Ezekiel at the time of his call (Ezekiel 1). The biblical term for this phenomenon of Jehovah's appearance in fire and cloud and smoke is "the glory of the Lord" (Exodus 24:16f; Leviticus 9:23f; Numbers 14:10; 16:19, 42; 1 Kings 8:11). (PBC)

Fire too represents the holiness of God, especially as he reveals himself in theophany. By fire he can mete out judgment upon sinners (Dan 7:11). Yet by fire he can also refine and purify his people (Zech 13:9; Mal 3:2–3; cf. 1 Cor 3:11–15). Once again, this symbolism, drawn at least partially from Daniel, is common in Revelation. Christ has eyes of fire (Rev 1:14; 2:18; 19:12; cf. Rev 10:1), and he can purify his people as if by fire (Rev 3:18; cf. Rev 15:2). Fire characterizes God's theophany (Rev 4:5) and his judgments. (CC)

throne ... wheels. See Eze 1:15–21, 26–27. (CSB)

Ancient royal thrones were sometimes represented as having wheels; and so God's throne has them, which is to convey the impression of its not being a throne that is bound to one place. For God's judgment, as it He Himself, is omnipresent. (Leupold)

7:10 RIVER OF FIRE – This symbolizes Jesus' burning zeal which would destroy his enemies but rescue his people.

To devour the sinful and hostile forces of the world and to purify the children of the Kingdom. (Kretzmann)

Thousands ... ten thousand. See 1Sa 18:7 and note. (CSB)

1 Clem: “Let us consider the whole multitude of His angels, how they stand ever ready to minister to His will.... Let us therefore, conscientiously gathering together in harmony, cry to Him earnestly, as with one mouth, that we may be made partakers of His great and glorious promises” (*ANF* 1:14). Ter: “The Divine Monarchy also is administered by so many legions and hosts of angels; ... it has not from this circumstance ceased to be the rule of one” (*ANF* 3:599). Cyr Jer: “Not that the multitude is only so great, but because the Prophet could not express more than these. So there will be present at the judgment in that day, God, the Father of all, Jesus Christ being seated with Him, and the Holy Ghost present with Them; and an angel’s trumpet shall summon us all to bring our deeds with us” (*NPNF* 2 7:112). (TLSB)

Ten is a symbol of completeness. Its multiple extends that to a greater degree.

STOOD BEFORE HIM – Stand in Scripture is an expression of readiness to serve, the common posture for prayer, and also of worship, the people stand to show their respect for the public reading of God’s Word. (PBC)

BOOKS WERE OPENED – This is like a court of law where books are opened and verdicts read. One book contains those who are saved. Other books are also mentioned in Revelation 20:12 and have to do and contain the deeds of people like that of Matthew 25. This is not to suggest that the deeds save anyone, they merely the proof of the faith that lives in people and saves them. (PBC)

To have one’s name inscribed means to be saved. To have it blotted out means to be lost. So as a figure it implies that God has an accurate record of all that are His own. (Leupold)

7:13 *like a son of man.* † See Rev 1:13. A title that Jesus applied to himself. He will be enthroned as ruler over the whole earth (previously misruled by the four kingdoms of men), and his kingdom “will never be destroyed” (v. 14), whether on earth or in heaven. (CSB)

Daniel uses comparison as he did with the first three beasts earlier in the vision (“like,” vv 4–6). There is something special about this figure, however. This vision describes the commissioning of the Christ as our Lord and Savior. (TLSB)

He is called “one like a son of man,” a human being, not another in the series of frightful beasts. We know from the NT that Christ, who frequently used OT terminology in speaking of Himself and His work, referred to Himself as “Son of Man.” The humble appearance of Jesus on earth as the lowliest of humans emphasized that it was not His purpose to frighten us or to overwhelm us, but to gain our confidence, to win us by His self-sacrificing love. (PBC)

coming with the clouds of heaven. See Mk 14:62; Rev 1:7. (CSB)

Different origin from the beasts, which came from the sea. (TLSB)

He did not rise out of the sea, as the beasts did, or standing on earth, as we do. Here we think of Jesus' own words: "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Almighty One and coming on the clouds of heave." (Mark 14:62) (PBC)

WAS LED INTO HIS PRESENCE – It is on the basis of this passage, which describes the formal inauguration of the Messiah as King of His eternal kingdom, that Jesus applied the name "Son of Man" to Himself so frequently in the gospels. (Kretzmann)

7:14 In contrast to the beasts whose dominion was taken away (v 12), the Ancient of Days invested the "one like a son of man" with an everlasting reign. Just: "There would be two advents of His,—one in which He was pierced by you; a second, when you shall know Him whom you have pierced" (ANF 1:210). Cyr Jer: "We preach not one advent only of Christ, but a second also, far more glorious than the former. For the former gave a view of His patience; but the latter brings with it the crown of a divine kingdom. For all things, for the most part, are twofold in our Lord Jesus Christ: a twofold generation; one, of God, before the ages; and one, of a Virgin, at the close of the ages: His descents twofold; one, the unobserved, *like rain on a fleece*; and a second His open coming, which is to be. In His former advent, He was wrapped in swaddling clothes in the manger; in His second, He *covers Himself with light as with a garment*" (NPNF 2 7:104). (TLSB)

WAS GIVEN AUTHORITY – He was given absolutely unlimited dominion – over all people, and forever – in contrast to rule over a particular area of the world for a measured period of time. (PBC)

ALL PEOPLES ... MEN OF EVERY LANGUSGE WORSHIPED HIM – Daniel's vision pictured the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Apostle Paul that "...at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord..." (Philippians 2:10f) (PBC)

His reign defies all boundaries. (TLSB)

The final goal of all history is described here as Messiah's taking up His eternal rule among the people whom He has purchased with His life's blood. (PBC)

everlasting. Contrasts with the reigns of others, which are subject to God's limited plans for them. (TLSB)

ONE THAT SHALL NEVER BE DESTROYED – The description clearly shows that the Son of Man is a person distinct from the Father, and that the fact of His eternal dominion and power is a direct argument for His deity. Cp. Rev. 11, 15; 19, 16. (Kretzmann)

7:13–14 Daniel sees "one like a son of man," coming with the clouds of heaven, who is given eternal rule over the whole earth. We recognize that this King is Jesus, fully divine and fully human, Son of Mary and Son of the Most High, whose kingdom will never end (Lk 1:32–33).

May we ever “live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him.” • Jesus, my King, rule me body and soul as You know best. Amen. (TLSB)

EPISTLE – Revelation 1:4b-8

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits^a before his throne,⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,⁶ and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.⁷ Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.⁸ **“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, **“who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”****

1:4-6 John’s greeting explicitly mentions the persons of the Holy Trinity. (TLSB) See 1:4 – who is... Father / seven spirits...Holy Spirit / 1:5 – Jesus Christ – First born...Jesus

These verses give a trinitarian imprimatur by which God himself confirms the validity of the message of Revelation. It is given in the form of a greeting benediction in which John speaks the blessing of God’s grace and peace to his recipients, the seven churches. (CC p. 39)

The trinitarian formula is presented in the words “the One Who Is and Who Was and Who Is Coming, and from the seven Spirits ... and from Jesus Christ” (1:4–5). In these words John names the triune God: Father, Spirit, and Jesus Christ. At first glance it would appear that already in the first phrase, “the One Who Is and Who Was and Who Is Coming,” there is a representation of the triune God. Both Oecumenius (sixth century) and Andreas¹⁹ (sixth century) in their Greek commentaries on Revelation interpret it thus: the “One Who Is” is the Father; the one “Who Was” is the Son, the Logos; and the one “Who Is Coming” is the Comforter, the Spirit. Victorinus (third century) in his Latin commentary apparently believed that this entire threefold first phrase is not a reference to the Trinity but to Jesus Christ, and Athanasius also so interpreted this first three-part title.²¹ However, neither of those ancient interpretations is accepted by this commentary. It is better to hear 1:4–5 as naming three distinct persons: (1) “the One Who Is and Who Was and Who Is Coming”; (2) the seven Spirits; and (3) Jesus Christ. Each refers to one of the persons of the Trinity. (CC p. 39)

First, the revelation comes from God the Father. ὁ ὢν (“the One Who Is”) in the phrase ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος (“the One Who Is and Who Was and Who Is Coming”) leads one to the LXX’s rendering of the holy name (the tetragrammaton, Yahweh) in Exodus 3. In Ex 3:14 the LXX translates אֶהְיֶה אֲנֹכִי אֶהְיֶה (“I Am Who I Am”) with ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν (“I Am the One Who Is”). After God identifies himself, he then tells Moses to say to the children of Israel that, in the LXX’s rendering, ὁ ὢν (“the One Who Is”) sent

him. In Rev 1:4 John follows the LXX rendering of the holy name by his use of ὁ ὢν; in the context of 1:4–6 ὁ ὢν then refers to God the Father. (CC pp. 39-41)

But what are the referents of ὁ ἦν (“Who Was”) and ὁ ἐρχόμενος (“Who Is Coming”), for these expressions do not appear in the LXX’s rendering of Exodus 3? Could ὁ ἐρχόμενος (“Who Is Coming”) be in the same or a similar tradition as the rendering of יהוה (“I Am”) with a future tense, as Aquila and Theodotion do in Ex 3:14? (Here in Rev 1:4 John uses the present participle ἐρχόμενος [“is coming”] in a future sense since it contrasts with the imperfect past tense of ἦν [“was”] and with the present tense of ὢν [“is”].) That might possibly be part of the answer, but the full tripartite title seems to be unprecedented. (CC pp. 39-41)

John, in his own way, uses ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος (“the One Who Is and Who Was and Who Is Coming”) for the holy name in Exodus 3. He takes ὁ ὢν (“the One Who Is”) from the LXX of Ex 3:14 and then expands it by adding καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος (“and Who Was and Who Is Coming”). By so doing he states that the ever present One is continually present now, as he was in the past and as he always will be in the future. *The entire three-part phrase, then, is really a rendition of יהוה (“I Am,” which is in the Hebrew Qal imperfect tense) in Ex 3:14, which is God’s own explanation for the tetragrammaton, יהוה, the holy name, Yahweh (Ex 3:13–16).* John may not have been the only one to interpret the holy name in this way, for a rabbinic tradition also interprets יהוה as “I am He Who has been, Who is now, and Who will be in the future.” (CC pp. 39-41)

Why does John have ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος (“the One Who Is and Who Was and Who Is Coming”) in the nominative after ἀπό (“from”) instead of the genitive that normally follows that preposition? It is for the sake of emphasis. Whether John did this consciously in deference to the holy name, because to have used an oblique case would have necessitated a vocalized change of that name, can only be surmised. Certainly John, because of his Jewish background, would be aware of Jewish practices in deference toward the holy name. But more likely, if not also in addition, John wanted to make and emphasize a theological truth that the Father is the first among equals. The Father, while equal in essence with the Spirit and Jesus Christ, is nevertheless the primus of the three persons (cf. 1 Cor 15:28; Jn 14:16-17, 26). In deference to the holy name, that is, in deference to God the Father, through worship of Jesus Christ by means of the Spirit, John keeps this Greek rendering of the holy name in the nominative and does not put it in an oblique case such as the genitive. (CC pp. 39-41)

Wherever this Greek form of the holy name (ὁ ὢν, “the One Who Is”) appears in Revelation, John keeps to this theological principle, namely, that the Father is the first among equals; he also keeps to this principle throughout the book whenever the heavenly court worships God and the Lamb (in that order; e.g., 4:8–11; 5:9–14). ὁ ὢν appears a total of five times in Revelation, *all in reference to the Father* (Rev.1:4, 8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5) In 1:4 and 1:8 the elements of the three-part title “the One Who Is and Who Was and Who Is Coming” appear in the same order, but in 4:8 ὁ ἦν (“the One Who

Was”) comes first and then καὶ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος (“and Who Is and Who Is Coming”). In 11:17 and 16:5 only ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν (“the One Who Is and Who Was”) is present; ὁ ἐρχόμενος (“Who Is Coming”) is absent. In each case where there is a difference, the author is making a theological statement—each will be treated in the commentary on the respective verses. Here in 1:4 this Greek rendering of the holy name points to the fact that the message of Revelation comes first of all from God the Father. (CC pp. 39-41)

1:4 seven churches. Located about 50 miles apart, forming a circle in Asia moving clockwise north from Ephesus and coming around full circle from Laodicea (east of Ephesus). They were perhaps postal centers serving seven geographic regions. Apparently the entire book of Revelation (including the seven letters) was sent to each church (see v. 11). (CSB)

Second, the prophetic message of Revelation comes from “the seven Spirits” (1:4). Because of the number seven, commentators have wondered whether these are seven angels, corresponding to the seven archangels in Jewish tradition (see 1 Enoch 19:1; 20:1–7, where seven archangels are listed and named), or corresponding to the seven angels of the seven churches (and thus also to the seven angels with the trumpets [Rev 8:6–11:19] and censers [Revelation 15–16]). Against this identification is the fact that “the seven Spirits” (1:4) are on the same level of authority as God the Father and Jesus Christ. If these “Spirits” were angels, they would never be accorded the same status as God and Jesus Christ in Christian theology. (In Revelation angels are never worshiped, only God; cf. 19:10; 22:8–9.) Rather, these “seven Spirits” are a reference to the Holy Spirit. (CC pp. 41-42)

In biblical thought, the number seven symbolizes God. It is the sum of the number three, which symbolizes God himself (cf. Gen 18:1–2; Is 6:3), and the number four, which symbolizes creation (cf., e.g., Ezek 37:9; 1 Chr 9:24). Seven thus symbolizes the God of creation. Because God rested on the seventh day (Gen 2:2–3), the number is also used to picture or refer to perfection, completion, and holiness, especially in reference to God’s activities and creative works. (CC pp. 41-42)

Here in Rev 1:4 the “seven Spirits” are also a reflection of the seven lamps and seven eyes in Zech 3:9–4:10, where they represent the Spirit of God, by which God sees the whole earth. That is, *God is present with his creation through the sevenfold presence of his Spirit*. In Is 11:1–2 the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit from God will rest upon the Branch of Jesse, the Messiah. In Rev 5:6 the Lamb has seven horns and seven eyes. And in Moses’ tabernacle there was the menorah, the sevenfold lampstand (Ex 25:31–40), which represented God’s presence with his people by way of his Spirit (cf. Zech 4:2–6). *The seven Spirits of Rev 1:4 represent the Holy Spirit in his sevenfold presence*. God, by his Spirit, is always present with his people—fully present. *Throughout Revelation the number seven represents God’s presence by his Spirit*. Thus the church, when represented in Revelation by the seven churches (Revelation 2–3), is pictured as always under the Spirit of God. The heavenly hosts worship God by the presence of the seven Spirits before God’s throne (4:5). The Lamb of God, with the seven horns and

eyes (5:6), is he on whom the sevenfold Spirit rests (Is 11:1–2). And the exalted Christ, as the Son of Man, stands in the midst of the seven golden lampstands, which represent the church under the lordship of Christ by the Spirit (1:13). (CC pp. 41-42)

Throughout Scripture, the number seven symbolizes completeness (cf. Gen. 2:1-3; 7:2; Lev. 4:6, 17; Rev. 2:1; 6:1; 8:2; 15:7). Accordingly, these seven churches may represent the whole Christian Church on earth and the challenges churches face. However, this does not mean these churches represent epochs (A particular period of history – Dictionary) of Church history. (TLSB)

John was not speaking about worship buildings or formally organized congregations. None of the early Christian churches had public buildings for worship as we know them today. Most met in homes; and a few may have met in synagogues. By the word churches, John was referring to readers as people who belong to God. To those gathered around the Word and sacraments at these seven localities, Jesus will now give the reassurance of his final victory. (PBC p. 11)

Asia. A Roman province lying in modern western Turkey. (CSB)

John wrote a letter to each of these communities. (TLSB)

Grace and peace. See notes on Jn. 4:2; Jn. 14:27; 20:19; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2. “Grace” is used only twice in Revelation (here and in 22:21) but over 100 times by Paul. (CSB)

Grace is the undeserved pardon that God gave us in Jesus. It is a one-sided, forgiving love. Peace is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *shalom*. God’s forgiving love in the heart of the believer produces this peace. It comes from knowing that Jesus satisfied God’s anger over our sins and has declared an end to the war between himself and the sinner. (PBC p. 12)

“Grace” (*charis*) means “God’s undeserved love, God’s unmerited favor.” The theological importance of this word cannot be overestimated. It corresponds in meaning with the Hebrew word *chesed* usually translated “love,” “mercy,” or “loving-kindness.” “In the Old Testament the word *chesed* expresses Yahweh’s covenant grace to His people. Thus Yahweh is predicated as the God ‘who shows covenant grace to thousands of generations of those that love me and keep my commandment’” (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 9, p. 383). This is the word in the well-known liturgical refrain “his love endures forever,” as in Ps 136. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

In the synoptic gospels *charis* occurs only in Luke, who uses it to characterize the message of salvation. The word is used frequently in Paul’s epistles for the central concept that most clearly expresses his understanding of salvation: it is by *grace* and through faith. God’s grace is his favor toward us based on the atoning crucifixion of Christ. It is opposed to righteousness through works of the law. The word is used by Paul in the *sedes doctrinae*, Eph. 2:89: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through

faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” John ends Revelation with a benediction that uses this powerful word: “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all” (22:21). The book therefore both begins and ends with the theme of God’s grace in Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

“Peace” (*eirēnē*) is another tremendously important theological word. “In the NT the meaning . . . has the sense of wellbeing or salvation . . . the principal meaning is salvation in a deeper sense . . . three conceptions call for notice: a. peace as a feeling of peace and rest; b. peace as a state of reconciliation with God; and c. peace as the salvation of the whole man in an ultimate eschatological sense” (*TDNT*, vol. 2, pp. 411–12). “The peace of which John speaks here is peace between God and man. It is the peace of heart, mind, and conscience which flows from the assurance of the forgiveness of sin (John 14:27; Rom 5:1; 1 Cor 1:3; Phil 4:7; 2 Peter 1:2)” (Luther Poellot, *Revelation* [St. Louis: Concordia, 1962] p. 8). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

The NT epistles usually contain a greeting like “grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” The greeting of Revelation is unique. God is not even described in the predictable sequence as the one who was, who is, and who is to come. Instead, the formula begins with the present, moves to the past, and ends with the future. The same form is used again in v 8. Perhaps this sequence emphasizes the Lord’s living presence with his people in the present, just as he was with his people in the past, and will return for his people in the future. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

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who is ... was ... is to come. A paraphrase of the divine name from Ex 3:14–15. Cf. Heb 13:8. – This is “I am” language from Exodus 3:14 where God calls Moses to lead God’s people out of Egypt. (CSB)

God the Father. This characterization stress that God is eternal, without beginning or end. (TLSB)

ἀπὸ ὃ ὦν καὶ ὃ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος—In standard Greek ἀπό takes the genitive, but here the nominative follows. John knows the usual usage of ἀπό for in 1:4–5 he uses it to govern the genitive (πνευμάτων, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). He *purposely* shifts from the genitive to the nominative. In Revelation ἀπό is used to point out the “source” of something and is never used of an angel. When an angel is the agent, the preposition διὰ (1:1), ἐν (10:8), or ἐκ (10:10) is used; in those cases too, the angel is only the *agent*, not the source. (CC pp. 34-35)

The description of God as the one “who is” alludes to Exod 3:14, where the Lord reveals the meaning of his name as “I am who I am.” The God who speaks to us in Revelation is Yahweh, the same God who revealed himself to his people long ago (cf. also Is 41:4). The description of God as the one “who is to come” equates God with the returning Jesus Christ. Similarly, God’s description of himself as “I am the Alpha and the Omega” (also in 21:6) is echoed by Christ in 22:13, emphasizing that Christ is God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

seven spirits.† See NIV text note; cf. Zec 4:2, 10 and the sevenfold description of the Holy Spirit in Isa 11:2: (1) of the Lord, (2) of wisdom, (3) of understanding, (4) of counsel, (5) of power, (6) of knowledge, (7) of the fear of the Lord. (CSB)

An unusual way of referring to the Holy Spirit. (TLSB)

As this and the following verse contain a benediction from the Father and the Son, we must suppose that it is the Holy Spirit who is joined with them, as elsewhere, and not any created spirits. In accordance with the emblematical character of this book, he is described under the number seven, to denote his manifold and perfect divine operations. God is fully present. (Concordia Bible)

The Holy Spirit is referred to here as “the seven Spirits,” a reference to Is 11:2 which describes the seven-fold gifts of the one Spirit: “The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.” Note the reference to all three persons of the Trinity in the greeting of vv 4–5. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

1:5 JESUS CHRIST WHO IS THE FAITHFUL WITNESS – Jesus, who fearlessly testified during His ministry and trial. (TLSB)

Third, in addition to the Father and the Spirit (1:4), the revelation comes “from Jesus Christ,” identified as the conqueror of death and as “the *ruler* of the kings of the earth” (1:5). Jesus Christ, the witness to the truth of God, was faithful in his messianic mission and went to his death. But he is the firstborn of the dead, raised on the third day. Thus, he is described as the one who set God’s people free from their sins and as a result made them a kingdom for God, as well as priests to serve in the kingdom (the royal priesthood of all believers). The doxology voiced at the end of 1:6, while directly applied to Christ, is through him directed to God the Father by the Spirit. (CC pp. 42-43)

Why is Jesus Christ spoken of last, after the Father and the Spirit? It is because of his saving work, by which he has redeemed God’s people so that they can now worship God as his royal priests. This worship is directed through Christ to the Father and is inspired by the Spirit. (CC pp. 42-43)

This is the only book in the Bible which has such a trinitarian imprimatur (1:4–6), at least in this explicit form, by which the source and authority of God is placed upon a human’s writing. Because Revelation is the culmination of all scriptural revelation, this imprimatur

is also placed, by inference, on the entire Scripture, both the OT and the NT. This imprimatur placed on Revelation may also indicate that there will not be another word of God spoken until the Lord Christ comes at the End. And God's people must listen, for "the time is near" (1:3)—the time of judgment, but in particular the time of blessing in the presence of the exalted Christ. (CC pp. 42-43)

ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός, ὁ πρωτότοκος—Again these are nominative when one would expect them to be genitive because they are in apposition to Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. While the use of the nominative in place of the expected case is found in classical Greek, it is not the usual practice in literary Greek. (CC p. 35)

FIRSTBORN – The first born was privileged to receive a double portion of the inheritance (Dt. 21:7) and the leadership over the family (Gn. 35:23; 43:33; 2 Chron. 21:3). Sometimes the birthright was given to a younger son (Gn. 25:23; 49:3-4). The term also signifies the preeminence of the exalted Lord Jesus and His relationship to the heavenly Father (Col. 1:15, 18). (Lutheran Bible Companion – Volume 2)

πρωτότοκος—This word appears eight times in the NT. When used of the birth of a child, it refers to the firstborn, the first to open the womb. In the LXX it is used for בְּכֹרִית, which also means "firstborn" (Gen 25:13; 35:23). In Lk 2:7 it is used in reference to Jesus, the firstborn of Mary. Here in Rev 1:5, πρωτότοκος refers to the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the first one to conquer death *after whom many others will follow*, those who by right of his victory over death conquer death (cf. Rom 8:29). (In LXX Ps 88:28 [MT/ET 89:27], David is called the πρωτότοκος of God.) In Col 1:18 Paul also calls Jesus the firstborn of the dead, just after calling him the firstborn over all creation (1:15). (CC p. 35)

Though it is true that some were raised from the dead before Jesus was (1 Ki 17:22; 2 Ki 4:35; 13:21; Luke 7:14; John 11:43), Jesus may still be called "the firstborn from the dead." This is because those who were raised were able to be raised only because of Jesus' death and resurrection for them. Jesus is the first in the sense of being the cause of the resurrection of every believer, a fact obvious in Luke 7:14; John 11:43. He is the one who "has freed us from our sins by his blood." Therefore, Jesus is able to make the divine claim, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25–26). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

RULER – ἄρχων—In Rev 19:16 Jesus is called the βασιλεὺς βασιλέων. Here ἄρχων points to Jesus not only being *the* king among all kings, but the ruler or king who is the source of the royal authority and power given to all other kings (see Rom 13:1). ἄρχων is related to ἀρχή, which points to the source or origin or first cause of all things. Jesus Christ is called the ἀρχή of God's creation in Rev 3:14 (cf. 21:6; 22:13). (CC p. 35)

Christ is the risen and ascended One, to whom all authority in heaven and on earth has been given (cf. Mt. 28:19; Eph. 1:20-23). Jesus' heavenly coronation is depicted in Rev. 5:1-14. (TLSB)

FREED – λύσαντι—This is the aorist participle of λύω, “to release, loose.” A variant reading has λούσαντι, which is the aorist participle of λούω, “to wash” (uncials P and 046^c and several minuscules and also the Latin Vulgate). Either reading makes good sense, but the manuscript evidence strongly supports λύσαντι. For the baptismal idea of cleansing from sin through washing, see 7:14; 22:14; and the textual note on ἱμάτιον in 19:13. (CC p. 35)

1:6 *a kingdom and priests.* † This OT designation of Israel (see notes on Ex 19:6; Zec 3) is applied in the NT to the church (1Pe 2:5, 9). Cf. also 5:10; 20:6. (CSB)

Cf. Ex. 19:6. The Christian Church stands in continuity with God's OT people. The Church exercises its priestly function by offering intercessory prayers and by proclaiming “the excellencies of Him who called (them) out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). Revelation repeatedly depicts the saints sharing in Christ's rule (Rev. 2:27; 3:2). Luther: “We have nothing from God except the pure Word, namely, that the Lord Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father and is the Judge of the living and the dead, and that through Him we are kings and priests (Rev. 1:6)...Meanwhile we should believe and hope. For it one could see it now before one's eyes, there would be no need of faith” (AE 4:357). Hus: “That person, Christ, is everywhere present, since he is very God whose right it is to be everywhere without limitation. He is the bishop, who baptizes and takes away the sins of the world, John 1:29. He is the one who joins in marriage so that no man may put asunder...Mt. 19:6. He is the one who makes us priest...(Rev. 1:6). He performs the sacrament of the eucharist.. (Luke 22:19). This is he who confirms his faithful ones...Luke 21:15)” (The Church, p. 120). (TLSB)

Note on Ex. 19:6 Israel was to constitute the Lord's kingdom (the people who acknowledged him as their king) and, like priests, was to be wholly consecrated to his service and to do his will. – We are also priests. Our sacrifices are to be sacrifices of repentance, prayer, and praise in a life of service and thanksgiving. (Poellot p. 12)

BE GLORY AND POWER – αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος—A number of similar doxologies appear in Revelation: 4:11; 5:12, 13; 7:10, 12; 19:1. Other passages that are similar to the doxologies include 4:9; 12:10; 14:7; 19:7. There is a fine line between doxologies that *call for* the ascription of qualities to God and/or the Lamb in praise, and passages that *describe* the praising as it is or was voiced by others. Actually, both kinds of passages really function as *calls* for the Christian reader(s) and hearer(s) to *join in the praise*, and by reading aloud or by silently praying or meditating upon the words of the passages, the Christian does in fact express such worshipful praise. Doxologies to the Lamb alone are in 1:6; 5:12; doxologies to God alone are in 4:11; 7:12; 19:1; and the doxologies in 5:13; 7:10 are to both him “who sits on the throne” and “the Lamb.” (CC pp. 35-36)

Most of the doxologies share a common vocabulary. Most common is δόξα, “glory” (1:6; 4:11; 5:12, 13; 7:12; 19:1). Next in frequency are δύναμις, “power” (4:11; 5:12; 7:12; 19:1), and τιμή, “honor” (4:11; 5:12, 13; 7:12). Then follows εὐλογία, “blessing” (5:12, 13; 7:12). Appearing in two doxologies are ἰσχύς, “strength” (5:12; 7:12); κράτος, “dominion” (1:6; 5:13); σοφία, “wisdom” (5:12; 7:12); and σωτηρία, “salvation” (7:10; 19:1). Making a single doxological appearance are ἀλληλουϊά, “alleluia” (19:1); εὐχαριστία, “thanksgiving” (7:12); and πλοῦτος, “wealth” (5:12). The largest number of qualities is found in 5:12, which has seven elements, while 7:10 contains a single element, “[All] the *salvation* is with our God, who sits on the throne, and with the Lamb.” (CC p. 36)

Most of the doxologies include the definite article before the qualities ascribed to God and/or the Lamb. In doxological contexts the articles imply the idea of “all”: “*all the* glory and *all the* dominion” (1:6; other passages are similar). Therefore throughout this commentary the translation of such doxologies will include “all” in brackets. (CC p. 36)

Note how we are dependent upon God as the source of everything good. “He has made us”—creation was God’s act alone, and so is re-creation. Birth is God’s prerogative, and so is rebirth. It is the Lord who has made us members of his kingdom; “For Thine is the kingdom,” we pray in the Lord’s Prayer. It is the Lord who has made us priests who serve him with our lives and our highest worship, hence the acclaim, “To him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.” It would be appropriate to end the sermon with a paean of praise in the finest doxology. You may wish to have the congregation rise at the end of the sermon and sing one of the hymns that would express such a doxology, such as “The Lord, My God, Be Praised” (*LW* 174). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

1:7 *he is coming with the clouds.* † See Da 7:13; Mt 24:30; 26:64; Mk 13:26; 14:62; Lk 21:27; Ac 1:9. The first prophecy in the book, which opens, as it closes (22:20), with a reference to the second coming of Christ. (CSB)

The prologue concludes with a reference to the returning Lord: “Behold, he is coming with the clouds” (1:7). Jesus’ words to Caiaphas were, “You will see the Son of Man ... coming on the clouds of heaven” (Mt 26:64; cf. 1 Thess 4:17). This suggests that the thought “the time is near” (Rev 1:3) refers to the coming of the Lord Christ at the End. The epilogue also leads to this interpretation (22:6–7, 12, 20). (CC p. 43)

Clouds were a symbol of God’s presence. A cloud by day and fire by night led them out of Egypt and also gave them direction in the desert. At Mt. Sinai he spoke from a cloud. In the New Testament the Transfiguration was another example. – The whole human race will witness his coming. No one will be exempt from this confrontation with Jesus Christ, not “even those who pierced him.” – The whole history of the world and the Church is patterned toward and converges upon the glorious reappearance of Christ. (Stoekhardt p. 2)

The description of Christ coming on the clouds reminds us of the many times Scripture records the awesome events of God's dealings with mankind, making his presence known through the veil of the cloud. But this time the cloud does not conceal him, but is the vehicle of his return. The scene is also pictured in Dan 7:13. Our verse also quotes the well-known prophecy of Zech 12:10. Christ died also for all the unbelievers of the world, and so they are described as "those who pierced him" who will mourn at his return in glory. But for believers, it will be a day of great joy. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

EVERY EYE WILL SEE HIM – This refers to Christ's second coming on the Last Day. Note that Jesus' suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, sitting at God's right hand, and returning to judge are all mentioned in vv 5-7. (TLSB)

pierced. See Ps 22:16; Isa 53:5; Zec 12:10; Jn 19:34, 37. (CSB)

The whole human race will witness his coming. No one will be exempt from this confrontation with Jesus Christ, not "even those who pierced him" (1:7). While this is not a direct quote of Zech 12:10, it brings to mind that prophecy that the Lord will pour out his Spirit of grace on the house of David, and, says Yahweh, "They will look upon me whom they have pierced." The reference to this verse brings to light again Christ's death (cf. Rev 1:5); note that John alone among the four evangelists recounts the piercing of Jesus on the cross (Jn 19:33–37; cf. 1 Jn 5:6). And this piercing will cause people to beat their breasts and wail over him. (CC p. 43)

These are most probably God's manifest enemies. (CC p. 43)

PEOPLES OF THE EARTH WILL MOURN – Here in Rev 1:7 John states that "all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him." While "those who pierced him" most probably refers to God's manifest enemies, "the tribes" who wail and mourn over him probably refers to God's own repentant people (Zech 12:12–14 suggests such an interpretation; see also Lk 2:35; 23:27; Jn 20:11). The fact that the Lord Christ at his second coming will be recognized as *the one who was pierced* is a witness and confirmation of the truth that *by his death and resurrection* he alone is the Savior and Judge of the human race (see Jn 19:33–35; 1 Jn 5:6–12). (CC p. 43)

So shall it be! Amen. A double affirmation. (CSB)

1:8 *the Alpha and the Omega.*† The first direct message of Jesus in the book (cf. v. 17); he makes the same claim at the end of the book, 22:13 (cf. 21:6). The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. God is the beginning and the end (see 21:6). He rules over all human history. (CSB)

First and last letters of Greek alphabet. As such, this title underlines God's eternal nature. It should be noted that both here and at 21:6, this title is applied to God the Father, while at 22:13 it is applied to Jesus. This demonstrates Jesus' eternal divinity. (TLSB)

We understand the name “Alpha and Omega” in the light of Is 44:6: “I am the First, and I am the Last, and beside Me there is no God.” It is “the Lord God,” the only true God. He will not give His glory to another, neither His praise to graven images (Is 42:8). All other explanations of the name “Alpha and Omega” must flow out of this. For example: Only the true God could be “the Author and Finisher of our faith” (Heb 12:2) (Poellot p. 15)

The last verse of the prologue (Rev 1:8), while strange when compared to ordinary literary style, is characteristic of the style of both the prologue and epilogue of Revelation (22:7, 12). The divine voice (first person singular) breaks in to confirm the authority of God the Father as the prime source and originator of the revelatory-unveiling of Jesus Christ. It is the voice of God himself, by which he confirms the exalted status of his Son, Jesus Christ, as the Lord and Judge of all history, the human race and the world. (CC pp. 43-45)

There is no consensus as to the identity of the speaker of 1:8. Some commentators take the speaker to be Jesus Christ, others God the Father. To take the voice to be that of Jesus Christ would break up the literary symmetry of the prologue, which begins with God the Father as the giver of the revelation and ends with the Father as the authenticator of it. While Jesus Christ is the subject and object of the message, only God the Father, who originates and gives it to Jesus, can also then be the one who authenticates it (cf. Mt 3:17). Swete is correct when he says, “The solemn opening of the book reaches its climax here with words ascribed to the Eternal and Almighty Father.” It is the voice of almighty God himself, who by these words testifies to the position that his Son has earned and merited. The revelation of his Son’s exalted position is now to commence and unfold in the prophetic message of Revelation. There is no greater witness, and the affirmation of the divine authority of the book calls for no less a witness (Jn 5:36–37; 8:18). (CC pp. 43-45)

The title τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὰ (“the Alpha and the Omega,” Rev 1:8) expresses the eternity of God. In rabbinic theology the letters א and ת, the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet, represented totality and entirety, and in particular they represented the Shekinah, that is, God’s visible presence for the benefit of his people, as at the burning bush (Exodus 3). That rabbinic theology draws on OT passages such as Is 41:4; 43:10; 44:6; 48:12. The title “the Alpha and the Omega” appears again in 21:6, where it also is applied to God the Father, and in 22:13, where it is applied to Jesus Christ. Christ is the revealed glory of God (Jn 1:14, 18), the one through whom God graciously appears to his people. He is the eternal one who has entered human history and time. “The Alpha and the Omega” is one of the titles which God the Father and Jesus share in Revelation. In this case it is shared because the Son of God is eternal in the same absolute sense as is the Father. (CC pp. 43-45)

It is the Lord God, “Yahweh, the [only] God” (κύριος ὁ θεός, 1:8), who thus cries out that he is “the Alpha and the Omega.” Only here and in 21:5 does God the Father speak directly. God is further identified in 1:8 by ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, “the One Who

Is and Who Was and Who Is Coming” (first mentioned in 1:4), but now he is also called ὁ παντοκράτωρ, “the Almighty.” While in Revelation God shares with Jesus Christ the title τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ (“the Alpha and the Omega”), the titles ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος (“the One Who Is and Who Was and Who Is Coming”) and ὁ παντοκράτωρ (“the Almighty”) in Revelation are reserved for the Father alone. This is done so as to preserve the prime position of God the Father while at the same time displaying the equality of the Father and the Son. (CC pp. 43-45)

Thus the Father’s speaking of this word (1:8) here is analogous to the word at the transfiguration (with the added understanding here about the role of the Spirit from Jn 15:26–27; 16:13–15). At the transfiguration the Father confirms the Son, whom he has sent and on whom the Spirit rests: “This is my beloved Son; hear him” (Mk 9:7). Here in Rev 1:8 the Father confesses that this Spirit-given (Jn 15:26–27; 16:13–15) prophecy about the sent, crucified, and exalted Son (whose exaltation is the chief focus of the revelation) has its origin in himself, the Father, and so has his authority behind it. (CC pp. 43-45)

LORD GOD – κύριος ὁ θεός—This is the usual LXX translation of the Hebrew combination יהוה (יה) אלהים. Compare the MT and LXX of, for example, Gen 2:8; Is 17:6; 1Chr 22:19; Neh 9:7. The language and thought of Revelation draw heavily and frequently from the OT. To reflect that background, this commentary translates κύριος as “Yahweh” when it is used in combination with ὁ θεός after the pattern of יהוה (יה) אלהים in the Hebrew OT; that usage occurs in Rev 1:8; 4:8, 11; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 18:8; 19:6; 21:22; 22:5, 6. (CC p. 36)

ὁ θεός—Here the definite article acts as a “pointer” which suggests that “the God” is *the only* true God, “in distinction from the mythological gods.” See further the textual note on τῷ θεῷ in 19:4 and the excursus “The Use of the Definite Article with ‘God.’” (CC p. 36)

The description of God as the Alpha and the Omega (also in 21:6; 22:13) means first of all that there is no other God. But it also means that he is the creator of the world and the one who will bring this world to a close. He is the cause of all that exists, and the goal and purpose of all creation is to glorify and serve him (cf. the description of Jesus as “the author and perfecter of our faith,” both the source and the goal of faith, Heb 12:2). This idea is also contained in the title “Almighty,” which does not just emphasize the surpassing power of God, but also divine monergism in effecting our salvation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

Luther’s explanation of the First Commandment in the Large Catechism is applicable: “Therefore it is the intent of this commandment to require true faith and trust of the heart which settles upon the only true God, and clings to Him alone. That is as much as to say: ‘see to it that you let Me alone be your God, and never seek another.’” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

Almighty. Nine of the 12 occurrences of this term in the NT are in Revelation (here; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22). The other three are in Ro 9:29; 2Co 6:18; Jas 5:4. (CSB)

Because Revelation reserves this title for the Father (4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22), it stands in contrast with “the Alpha and the Omega” designation, which is applied to both Father and Son. Luther: “We are not the ones who can preserve the church, nor were our forefathers able to do so. Nor will our successors have this power. No, it was, is and will be he who says, ‘I am with you always, to the close of the age.’ AS it says in Hebrews 13:8, ‘Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, and forever’ and in Revelation 1:8, ‘He who is and who was and who is to come’” (AE 47:118). (TLSB)

ὁ παντοκράτωρ—This means “the Almighty, the All-Powerful.” It is a compound noun from πᾶς (πάντα, “all”) and κράτος (“power”). It appears ten times in the NT, nine of which are in Revelation^b (the other occurrence is in 2 Cor 6:18). In every instance it refers to God. The LXX uses παντοκράτωρ to translate ΠΙΣΤΑΥ, “[Lord of] hosts,” and ἰϋϋ, “the Almighty,” and uses it only of God. (See also the commentary below and the textual note on this title in 11:17.) Paul in Eph 6:12 calls Satan the κοσμοκράτωρ. At the time of John the Roman emperors were called αὐτοκράτωρ. (CC p. 37)

John praises the one true God—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—while simultaneously clarifying the identity of God’s people: they are the “kingdom” and “priests” for whom He will soon come. Given our continual failure to live up to such a high calling, we need to hear again and again the truth of our identity in Christ. When the Gospel of God’s grace is preached, the Church may speak a hearty “Amen” in its conviction that Jesus will return and then perfect our redemption. • Lord, You promise to return soon and transform us perfectly into Your image. Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!

GOSPEL – John 18:33-37

³³ Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” ³⁴ “Is that your own idea,” Jesus asked, “or did others talk to you about me?” ³⁵ “Am I a Jew?” Pilate replied. “It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?” ³⁶ Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.” ³⁷ “You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

18:33-37 In John 18, Jesus is betrayed by Judas (vv 2, 5). Jesus accepts the Father’s will, rebuking Peter’s protection by the sword (v 11). Later, Peter denies his Lord. Annas and Caiaphas falsely accuse Jesus, handing him to Pilate and demanding crucifixion (vv 19–32). Pilate questions Jesus (vv 33–38), finding no earthly crime. Pilate recognizes that Jesus is rejected for claiming to be the Messiah (cf. Jn 1:49; 12:15; 19:7). The Sanhedrin considers his kingship blasphemous (TDNT 1:577). Despite political innocence, Pilate commands crucifixion.

He fears accusations of disloyalty to the earthly king (see 19:12, 14–15, 19–22). Thus Jesus is betrayed by his disciples, religious leaders, the nation itself, and civil government. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

All four Gospels record Pilate's question to Jesus: "You, are you the King of the Jews?" But the Synoptics have the answer: "As you say," is the equivalent to the answer at John 18:37. Therefore it is clear that verses 34-37 in John supplement the Synoptics. This altercation is found only in John. Furthermore, Luke 23:2 makes plain why Pilate asked this question. Pilate had refused to sentence Jesus without a definite charge against Him. The threefold charge (Luke 23:2) is, in reality, only one: Jesus is a dangerous law-breaker. A total falsehood. They wanted an earthly King, a temporal Messiah. When they were disappointed they accused Him of being a rebellious, earthly king. Note that they say: "a king" not "the king." Pilate picks this up and asks: "You, are you the King of the Jews?" After this interview Pilate taunts the Jews with this title of Jesus. See Mark 15:9,12 and John 18:39. And he uses this title as the superscription on the cross. The Jews resented this. By the way, Pilate knew why the Jews hated Jesus. See Matthew 27:18 and Mark 15:10. They could not abide His favor with repentant publicans and sinners. (Buls)

18:33-35 After the Jews demanded the death penalty, Pilate summons Jesus to answer the criminal charge: "Are you [*su ei*, emphatic] the king of the Jews?" (emphasis added). In a legal pretense filled with irony, the heavenly King does not look kingly and his subjects deny his Kingship. Jesus asks Pilate if this charge is his or hearsay. Pilate distances himself, saying that because the nation, *your ethnos (to ethnos to son)*, and the chief priests delivered you, there must be a reason. (The word *delivered, paredōkan*, often refers to betrayal. Judas delivered Jesus to the Sanhedrin [Mk 14:10], the Sanhedrin delivered Jesus to Pilate [Mk 15:1], Pilate delivered Jesus to the will of the people [Lk 23:25], and soldiers delivered Jesus to execution [Mk 15:15]. The Gospels present a comprehensive abandonment of Christ by all.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

18:33 INSIDE THE PALACE – Beck: "Palace." NEB: "His headquarters." This verse and 38 indicate that Pilate spoke to Jesus privately. Pilate asks this question because the Jews had made the accusation: "He says that He Himself is Christ, a king." (Buls)

Are you the king of the Jews? Pilate's first words to Jesus, identical in all four Gospels. One glance was enough to show him that a dangerous rebel existed only in the imaginations of Jesus' enemies. (CSB)

Pilate's question revealed that he was aware of the Jewish leader's real complaint - Jesus' messianic claims. Politically speaking, Pilate saw no threat posed to Rome by the pitiable, but not criminal, man before him. (TLSB)

18:34 *Is that your own idea ... ?* If so, Pilate's question (v. 33) had meant, "Are you a rebel?" If the question had originated with the Jews, it meant, "Are you the Messianic King?" (CSB)

NASB: "Are you saying this on your own initiative or did others tell you" Beck: "Did you think of that yourself, or did others tell you about Me?" If Jesus had said "yes" He would have agreed with the false notions of the Jews. Had He denied, He would have denied His very purpose for coming into the world. He is asking Pilate to meditate on his own motive in asking the question. (Buls)

18:35 Pilate displays irritation for being drawn into what he perceived as a Jewish squabble motivated by jealousy of Jesus' public ministry. (TLSB)

Note in this section that neither Jesus nor Pilate give a direct answer to a question until verse 37 where Jesus directly answer Pilate's question. The translations are interesting: NEB: "What! am I a Jew?" NASB: "I am not a Jew, am I?" Pilate is disturbed by Jesus' question. He does not answer directly but his answer implies that he did not think of the question in verse 33 on his own but rather it was based on what the Jews said. And then his question in verse 35 clearly indicates that he does not want to be associated with the Jews. Jesus evades the question in verse 33 so that he can get at Pilate's motive in order to preach the Gospel to him. Pilate evades the question in verse 34 because he is not interested in Jesus as a person and to dissociate himself from the Jews on their charge against Jesus. Luke 23:2. He puts the blame on "your people and the chief priests." Incidentally, the plural form indicates Annas and Caiaphas. (Buls)

The question shows that Pilate does not believe the charges made in Luke 23:2, for Pilate knows they had delivered Him because of envy, Matthew 27:18; Mark 15:10, and so he is desperately trying to find a charge from Jesus Himself. (Buls)

18:36 *My kingdom.* Jesus agrees that he has a kingdom, but asserts that it is not the kind of kingdom that has soldiers to fight for it. It was not built, nor is it maintained, by military might. (CSB)

Jesus does not answer Pilate's question directly but is now beginning to answer the question put to Him by Pilate in verse 33. His answer is composed of two sentences. The first is a simple statement informing Pilate what His Kingdom is NOT. RSV, Lenski and Hendriksen translate "Kingship" rather than "Kingdom." That is correct. By saying "my Kingship" He is admitting that He is a King. He is not speaking of people (Kingdom) but the character of His own Kingship. "Of this world" lays stress on HIS Kingship. "From" denotes both source and kind. It is not derived from this world and it is not of an earthly kind. It is absolutely unique. (Buls)

The second sentence is a contrary to fact condition. It is an *example* which proves that His Kingship is not derived from the world nor is it worldly in character. He could, of course, have used many other examples but Pilate, as a governor, would understand this one immediately. Note the fact that "the servants" are His. He is not denying that He *has* servants. He is denying that they defend Him as earthly servants defend their king. Jesus' weapons and Kingship differ greatly from those of earthly kings. "If it were" is final, it denotes negative purpose. "The Jews" indicates who the real enemies are. By the way, this contrary to fact condition plainly implies Jesus' innocence. The last sentence in verse 36 restates and emphasizes the first sentence in verse 36.

NASB: "As it is," meaning: "The true situation is that." (Buls)

Jesus does not defend himself against accusation, but emphatically declares he has a kingdom (*hē basileia hē emē*) whose origin is not of this world. Jesus is not a political threat, proven because his

servants would have fought (*ēgōnizonto*, imperfect middle indicative) to prevent Jesus from being delivered (and none did, except Peter, 18:10). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

Jesus was rejecting any worldly political aspirations or rebellious intent. Although a King, His kingdom did not threaten the external rule of the Roman Empire (cf. Lk. 20:25). (TLSB)

MY SERVANTS WOULD FIGHT - If Jesus had been establishing a political kingdom, He would have encouraged His disciples to fight to establish it (cf. vv. 10-11). "Legitimate public ordinances are good creations of God and divine ordinances, which a Christian can safely use. This entire topic about the distinction between the spiritual kingdom of Christ and a political kingdom has been explained in the literature of our writers... Christ's kingdom allows us outwardly to use legitimate political ordinances of every nation in which we live, just as it allows us to use medicine or the art of building, or food, drink, and air. Neither does the Gospel offer new laws about the public state, but commands that we obey present laws, whether they have been framed by heathens or by others. It commands that in this obedience we should exercise love" (Ap XVI 53-55). (TLSB)

18:37 *to testify to the truth.* Two of this Gospel's important ideas (see 1:7 and note; 1:14 and note; 14:6). (CSB)

This is a challenge to Pilate to assess the truth of the claim that Jesus presented. The person of Jesus and His revelation of divine truth are inseparable (14:6). (TLSB)

Jesus has just admitted His Kingship. That is indicated in Pilate's question. We attempt a translation: "So, then, after all, you are a KING?" Note the emphatic "You" in Jesus' answer. NASB: "You say correctly that I am a king." NEB is not recommended: "'King' is your word." In verse 36 He admitted that He had a Kingship and then proceeded to say what His Kingship was NOT. In 37^b He tells Pilate what His Kingship IS. (Buls)

Note "for this" is used twice. This does not denote two purposes but rather two aspects of the same purpose. The first, indicated by a passive perfect, denotes His incarnation which will never end. He points to His human nature. The second, indicated by a perfect active, tells us that He, true God, came willingly into the world. Both terms are key in the Gospel of John. He came from heaven and became a man to testify to the Truth, the Gospel. See 1:17. The Gospel is His means, not force of arms. (Buls)

"Everyone" is an open invitation to all, Jews, Gentiles and Pilate on this occasion. Jesus is inviting Pilate to listen to Him. The phrase is not adjectival: "Everyone who is truthful" but rather denotes source: "Everyone who is born of the Truth" or "Everyone who is converted by the Truth." The writer does not recommend NEB, NIV [above], or even Beck: "Who live in the truth." These translations make the phrase adjectival, not adverbial. KJV and NASB are better: "Everyone who is of the Truth," but one must still interpret this translation. Look at John 1:12-13. Jesus is yearning for Pilate's conversion but Pilate resists. To be begotten of the Truth goes hand in hand with listening to Jesus' voice. In 38^a Pilate clearly indicates that he was not begotten of the Truth and therefore

did not listen to Jesus' voice. To Pilate truth was a relative thing. When a man say: "What is Truth?" he shows that to him nothing is truth. Everything is relative which is not truth at all. And the accusations of the Jews (Luke 23:2) are nothing but lies. Compare John 8:44-47, an interesting commentary on the Jews who condemned Jesus. (Buls)

Augsburg Confession, Art. XXVIII, Tappert p. 83: Therefore, the two authorities, the spiritual and the temporal, are not to be mingled or confused, for the spiritual power has its commission to preach the Gospel and administer the sacrament. Hence it should not invade the function of the other, should not set up and dispose kings, should not annul temporal laws or undermine obedience to government, should not make or prescribe to the temporal power laws concerning worldly matters. Christ Himself said 'My kingship is not of this world' and again, 'Who made me a judge or divider over you?' (Luke 12:14). Paul also wrote in Philippians 3:20 'Our commonwealth is in heaven,' and in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 'The weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God.'
Apology, Art. XXIV. Par 50-51 (German only): Nothing keeps people with the church as does good preaching.

Bengel: Apply yourself entirely to the text; apply your entire study to yourself. (Buls)

Pilate infers from Jesus' testimony he is a King (*oukoun*, "Interrogative, when the question has inferential force," W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, W. Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957, 1979], 592; used by permission). Jesus replies that Pilate claims he is a King, thereby maintaining Pilate's responsibility to decide the case. Pilate later admits that Jesus committed no crime, yet he commands execution (v 38; 19:16). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

Jesus declares that he left his kingdom to witness to the truth. For this purpose he was born (*egō eis touto gegennēmai*, perfect passive indicative) and comes (*kai eis touto elēlutha*, present active indicative). In this expression, Jesus affirms his preexistence, an intentional incarnation, and that he is the manifestation of truth (see Ps 31:5; Jn 1:14, 17; 14:6; 17:3, 17). All who are of the truth (*pas ho ōn ek tēs alētheias*) hear and continue to hear his voice. Those who receive this witness belong to the truth as Jesus' loyal subjects. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)