

Sixth Sunday of Easter

FIRST READING – Acts 16:9-15

⁹ During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” ¹⁰ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

16:9-15 The Holy Spirit has prevented Paul from going to Asia or Bithynia (16:6–7), but now in Troas he is summoned by the Spirit and sent to Macedonia, in Europe, on God’s mission to proclaim the Gospel. “It is at least clear what Luke intends here: the comments make obvious God’s guidance on the way to Europe. . . . Because they were prevented from going to the left (Asia) and right (Bithynia), the only way remaining was to the west, and the coast” (Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987], 127). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

God is the one who opens and shuts doors for his Gospel to move as a “summer rain” (Luther) to create saving faith “where and when he wills” (AC V 3). It might be appropriate to quote at length Wilhelm Löhe’s definition of missions: “The Church of the New Testament . . . one Church of all nations, one Church with children in all countries and collecting them out of all countries, the one herd of the one Shepherd, gathered from various folds (Jn 10:10), the *common, truly catholic* Church, transversing all times and finding confluence from all nations—*she is the big idea that is still becoming fulfilled, God’s work in the last hours of this world, the favorite thought of all saints in life and in death for which they lived and are living, died and are dying—the thought which necessarily pervades all missions, or she does not know, what she is or what she should be.* For the mission is nothing else than God’s one Church in motion—the realization of one common, catholic Church. Wherever this Church enters, there walls, which separate nations, fall; wherever she comes, she brings together those who were previously deeply divided; where she gains room she creates the wonderful unity, which enables the people from all different languages to understand each other in *all matters*” (Wilhelm Löhe, *Gesammelte Werke vol. 5* [Neuendettelsau: Freimund Verlag, 1954], 96; author’s translation). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

16:9 *vision.* One of the ways God gave direction (cf. 10:3). (CSB)

Perhaps in a dream during the night. (TLSB)

Most probably a dream. Dreams carried far more significance in the ancient world than today, and the Bible records repeated instances where they served as a vehicle for communication between God and people. (LL)

It is not clear whether this vision is given to Paul as a dream while asleep or while he was awake. However, a man (singular male) from Macedonia (possibly identifying traditional garb and language) appears to Paul, exhorting him to come to Macedonia. This double emphasis on Macedonia dispels all doubt about the destination intended. What the help is about is not spelled out; however, it can be assumed that Paul has what is called for (cf. Acts 3:6). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

This v 9 was used as one of the main missionary texts of the Enlightenment. David Bosch elaborates on the “matrix of the Enlightenment”: “On the one hand, it spawned an attitude of tolerance to all people and a relativistic attitude toward belief of any kind; on the other, it gave birth to Western superiority feelings and prejudice, . . . tolerance as well as intolerance, relativism as well as bigotry could often be found side by side in the same person or group” (David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* [Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991], 289, 339ff, 344). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

However, even if there is the possible misuse, which Bosch highlights and which concerns others lording it over others just because they can or feel they should, this passage illustrates that there is a legitimate call for help from brothers and sisters in need—a global responsibility, connectedness, and ecclesial partnership flowing from the God-given fellowship/communion of the sharing of the very same holy things (Word and Sacrament) among the limbs of Christ’s Body, the Church (cf. 1 Cor 12:26)—that those who have will help those who don’t and that a God-pleasing exchange will happen for the common good (cf. 1 Cor 12:7, 11, 25; 2 Cor 9:12). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

man of Macedonia. Macedonia had become a Roman province in 148 B.C. There is no indication that the man of the vision is Luke, as some have suggested, but he does join the group at this point. (CSB)

West across the Aegean Sea; modern northern Greece. This may be the first time the Gospel moves from Asia onto the continent of Europe. (TLSB)

Was that Roman province which covered the area which today includes Yugoslavia. To go to Macedonia meant to take the gospel to the continent of Europe. (PBC)

16:10 *we got ready.* This is where the “we” passages of Acts begin (see Introduction: Author). The conclusion is that Luke is informing the reader that he had joined the party at Troas. (CSB)

First of the so-called “we” sections of Acts. (TLSB)

Paul, together with his fellow missionaries, is instructed by this vision that God is calling them to preach the Gospel to the Macedonians. The mission to Europe was not following a human whim, but rather divine inspiration. This does not mean that all our dreams are divinely inspired, but rather that in this case Paul as apostle of the Lord was under compulsion, calling, and mission of the triune God. It also shows that God is free to guide, lead, and call his people in special ways, where and when it pleases him to do so. It is worth noting that this evaluation was not taken by St. Paul alone, but rather by the team (plural “we” and “us”). Further, it is clarified that the help to be given is Gospel preaching and teaching. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

16:6–10 God guided Paul and his companions in unexpected directions. Our plans in general, and in particular our plans for the spread of the Gospel, do not always proceed as we hope. Yet, God directs us as His messengers to the people and places He would have us go. His grace is not bounded by our weakness but serves His good purposes in Christ. • Heavenly Father, continue to send workers into Your

harvest field. Enable missionaries, evangelists, and pastors to always see their ministry as a calling from You. Amen. (TLSB)

¹¹ From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day on to Neapolis. ¹² From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days. ¹³ On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. ¹⁴ One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. ¹⁵ When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

16:11-12 "The fact that the trip goes so well is a confirmation of the . . . vision" (Conzelmann, 129). Louis Harms, the father of the Hermannsburg Missions, wanted his missionary teams to get to Ethiopia. Although they were prevented from reaching their goal four times, Harms never gave up. Did he see this as a challenge to his faithfulness, determination, and dedication to God's calling, or was it just Saxon stubbornness? During his lifetime, the Hermannsburg missionaries did not make it to Ethiopia. The questions remain open: when is a mission goal God-given and when is it a fiction of our own mind? This calls for spiritual discernment, openness for God's guidance, and the realization that we human beings are fallible and make serious errors of judgment even if we believe we are pleasing God (cf. Rom 10:2; Jn 16:2). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

16:11 *Samothrace*. An island in the northeastern Aegean Sea. It was a convenient place for boats to anchor rather than risk sailing at night. (CSB)

Neapolis. The seaport for Philippi, ten miles away; modern Kavalla. (CSB)

16:12 *Philippi*. A city in eastern Macedonia named after Philip II, father of Alexander the Great (see map of "Philippi"). Since it was a Roman colony, it was independent of provincial administration and had a governmental organization modeled after that of Rome (see note on 13:14). Many retired legionnaires from the Roman army settled there, but few Jews. See Introduction to Philippians: Recipients. (CSB)

leading city. Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia. But Macedonia had four districts, and Philippi was in the first of these. Amphipolis, however, was the first city of that district. Luke may have intended to say that it was "a" leading city (there is no article in the Greek), or that it was the first city reached from the border, or that its fame and significance made it truly the leading city of the area. (CSB)

16:13 ON THE SABBATH - "And on the Sabbath day . . ." Paul and his missionary companions look for a place of prayer—a synagogue or related place, where Jews would gather on this day. They do not find a sanctuary in the city, but rather an informal gathering of women outside the city walls alongside a river. Although in the vision they were called by "a man," Paul and his companions don't hesitate, but sit down to teach this gathering. That's the insignificant starting

point for missions in Europe—nothing established, just a “humble beginning.” Nothing is said about the kind of worship practices there or what they were reading, discussing, or doing. However, it is stressed that Paul and his fellows do the talking. They are the messengers, the evangelists, teachers, missionaries, and apostles. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

Regular day of worship for those who followed the God of Israel. (TLSB)

a place of prayer. There were so few Jews in Philippi that there was no synagogue, so the Jews who were there met for prayer along the banks of the Gangites River (see map of “Philippi”). It was customary for such places of prayer to be located outdoors near running water. (CSB)

Apparently there were few Jews, particularly Jewish men, and therefore no synagogue in Philippi. (TLSB)

Ten men were needed to form a synagogue and Philippi had only a small Jewish population. Places erected near water so that the ceremonial washings prescribed in the Jewish law could be performed. (PBC)

WOMEN – Luke and Acts highlight the role of women, the only worshipers of God present on this occasion. (TLSB)

16:14 Lydia. A businesswoman. Her name may be associated with her place of origin, the Hellenistic district of Lydia. (CSB)

Lydia, this first European convert, was a “proselyte of the gate” (R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1944], 657) and as such already attracted to Judaism and the living God. It is he who “opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.” This is an illustration of what the Church confesses (cf. AC V). “All the women at the prayer-place heard the missionaries speak, but all did not heed as Lydia did. . . . In Lydia we have a beautiful example of adult conversion” (Lenski, 658–59). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

Thyatira. In the Roman province of Asia, 20 miles southeast of Pergamum (in the Hellenistic kingdom of Lydia). It was famous for its dyeing works, especially royal purple (crimson). See Rev 1:11 and note on Rev 2:18. (CSB)

City in Asia Minor; a center for the manufacture of purple dye. (TLSB)

DEALER OF PURPLE CLOTH – The expensive dye made a profitable trade. (TLSB)

worshiper of God. Lydia was a Gentile who, like Cornelius (see 10:2), believed in the true God and followed the moral teachings of Scripture. She had not, however, become a full convert to Judaism. (CSB)

opened her heart. After the resurrection the minds of the disciples were opened to understand the Scriptures (Lk 24:45); similarly, Lydia's heart was opened to respond to the gospel message of Paul. (CSB)

Paul spoke the message, and the Lord worked through it to create a faithful response. "With this Word the Holy Spirit is present and opens hearts, so that people (like Lydia in Acts 16:14) pay attention to it and are converted only through the Holy Spirit's grace and power, who alone does the work of converting a person" (FC Ep II 5). (TLSB)

16:15 SHE AND MEMBERS OF HER HOUSEHOLD WERE BAPTIZED – As is common in Acts, Baptism is granted immediately and is bestowed on the entire household along with its head (cf 10:44–48). *household.* Term includes children and servants. (TLSB)

STAY AT MY HOUSE – Her home became their headquarters for mission work in Philippi. Her household provided the nucleus of a congregation in that city. (PBC)

Lydia offered the hospitality of her home, which likely became a gathering place for the Philippian believers. (TLSB)

Although this is sometimes used as an example for infant Baptism, there is no direct reference to it (Conzelmann, 130 [especially footnote 13]). However, we do hear about Lydia's hospitality and that this urging from her side was accepted by the missionaries. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

16:11–15 Paul begins his work in Philippi through Lydia. At times, Christians may feel isolated from worship and fellowship. Yet, God opens the hearts of people to believe, provides others who are faithful to the Lord, and binds them together in homes and families. • Heavenly Father, we thank You for opening the door of faith to many faithful women throughout the ages—Sarah, Deborah, Ruth, Esther, Elizabeth, Mary, and Lydia. Guide and bless women today to be equally receptive to Your Word. In the name of our Lord Jesus, the Son of Mary. Amen. (TLSB)

SECOND READING – Revelation 21:9-14, 21-27

⁹ One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." **¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.** **¹¹ It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.** **¹² It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.** **¹³ There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west.** **¹⁴ The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.** **²¹ The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.** **²² I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.** **²³ The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.** **²⁴ The nations will walk by its light,**

and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. ²⁵ On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. ²⁶ The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. ²⁷ Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

21:9–27† A symbolic representation of the church triumphant. (CSB)

21:9-14 In these verses John is shown in detail the bride of Christ as she will live in the new heaven and earth. As stated above in 21:2, the bride is illustrated by and displayed as the holy city Jerusalem. Again an angel attends John and points out to him the bride of the Lamb in all her godly beauty. It is “one of the seven angels who had the seven censers full of the seven last plagues” (21:9), referring to the seven angels in 15:1, 7; 16:1–21. These seven angels had revealed to John the seven scenes in the third vision of events taking place on earth (16:1–21). One of these seven angels has been attending John throughout the conclusion of Revelation's prophecy (17:1–22:5). Most likely this angel remains the same. It seems that the seven censer-angels in 15:1–16:21 are the same as the seven trumpet-angels in 8:2–11:15, who in turn are the seven angels of the seven churches in chapters 1–3. Thus in Revelation there is one group of seven angels throughout. It is quite fitting that one of the angels of the seven churches (identified here in 21:9 as one of the censer-angels) should show to John the bride of the Lamb as she will appear in the new heaven and earth. (CC p. 608)

21:9-11, 22-27 This text appears in the section 21:1–22:5, dealing with the vision of the New Jerusalem, the seventh and last vision in the book of Revelation. Note the frequency with which parallel passages from Is 60 are quoted. Revelation 21 is the final consummation of Isaiah 60. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

21:9 SEVEN ANGELS - “One of the seven angels”—see 17:1. Some say it is unusual that one of the seven angels who had carried the seven bowls of wrath now shows this beautiful sight. However, God apparently intends a deliberate contrast between the Harlot City, shown in chapter 17, and the Bride City, introduced here. The Harlot City, Babylon, is great and old, sinful and shameful, an earthly travesty, vile and abominable. The Bride City, Jerusalem, is holy and new, pure and lovely, a heavenly reality. That the same angels could carry out such different tasks illustrates that God's servants do not select their tasks and that God works out his purpose even in judgment. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

SEVEN BOWLS – Note how the revelation doubles back to the earlier scene regarding the pouring out of God's wrath (16:17). (TLSB)

seven last plagues. See 15:1. (CSB)

Note how revelation doubles back to the earlier scene regarding the pouring out of God's wrath (16:17). (TLSB)

The angel says to John, “Come, I will show to you” (δεῦρο, δείξω σοι, 21:9). The same words were used in 17:1 when the same angel came to John to show him “the judgment of the great harlot.” The harlot is the antichurch, which on earth is opposed to the true church of Christ. Christ’s true church was portrayed by the woman in Revelation 12, who was adorned with the glory of God. That woman, who was the church militant in suffering (12:13–18), is now the bride of Christ (cf. 19:6–8). The harlot is gone forever, having been cast into hell (19:20; 20:10). Now the angel shows to John the true woman of God, the church triumphant, set forth here in Revelation 21 as the bride of the Lamb and portrayed as the holy city Jerusalem. (CC pp. 608-609)

THE BRIDE – Cf 12:6, 13–14; 19:7–8. This feminine imagery acts as a foil to the great prostitute of chs 17–19. (TLSB)

The New Testament frequently calls the church “the bride” of Christ, stressing the intimate relationship of love and fidelity. Verse 9 adds that as John glimpses the end of earthly time, the church now is also “the wife” (v 9); the marriage day has now arrived (cf. 19:7; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5: 25–27). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

THE LAMB - Note the prominence of the title “the Lamb,” which occurs in 21:9, 14, 22, 23, 27. It is important for explaining God’s grace in the suffering of the Lamb on the cross. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

21:10 CARRIED ME AWAY – ἀπήνεγκεν—This verb (ἀποφέρω) can mean either that John was carried away from where he was (BAGD, 1 a α and 1 b) or that he was forcefully carried away (BAGD 1 a β) by a power or volition other than his own. Both nuances could be present in meaning of the translation “carried ... away” here in 21:10. (CC p. 607)

MOUNTAIN GREAT AND HIGH – Much like the wilderness of 17:3, this is an otherwise inaccessible vantage point, allowing a glimpse into divine mysteries. (TLSB)

holy city Jerusalem. Though this symbol sometimes represents heaven itself (22:2), it also stands for God’s people (21:2). Here, it seems to represent the latter. (TLSB)

This was the best vantage point to see such greatness. In Scripture, mountains are often the location of great revelations (Sinai/Horeb, Moriah/Zion, Sermon on the Mount and the Transfiguration).

“A mountain great and high”—the city of Jerusalem was located on a height, something the psalmist emphasizes in Ps 48:2, thereby enabling it to draw all nations to itself (cf. vv 24–26, John 12:32); note the parallel in Ezek 40:1–2. The phrase also emphasizes the greatness and glory of what John saw (Lenski). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

The angel carries John “in the Spirit to a large and high mountain” (21:10). This is the fourth and final time John is said to be “in the Spirit” (ἐν πνεύματι). In 1:10 John, on the Lord’s day on Patmos, was “in the Spirit” when the exalted Son of Man commissioned him to write the revelation. In 4:2 John was “in the Spirit” when he was transported into heaven to see the vision of God’s enthroned glory and of the elevation of the victorious Lamb. In 17:3, after the angel had said to him, “Come, I will show to you the judgment of the great harlot” (17:1), the angel carried John into the desert “in the Spirit.” And now here in 21:10 John once again is “in the Spirit” as the angel carries him to a large mountain. “In the Spirit” indicates that it was by the Holy Spirit of God that John was transported to the mountain. This is an event in the Spirit (whether in the body or outside the body; cf. 2 Cor 12:2–4) by which John saw the bride of Christ visually, and possibly also experientially or empirically. Perhaps it was similar to the spiritual event in which Ezekiel was taken by the Spirit and lifted up between heaven and earth and then saw a vision in which he was taken by God from Babylon to Jerusalem (Ezek 8:1–4; cf. Ezek 3:12; 11:1). (CC p. 609)

In Rev 17:3 John was taken in the Spirit into “a desert” to see the harlot. Here in 21:10 he is taken in the Spirit to “a large and high mountain” to see the bride of the Lamb. While “the Harlot City is seen in a wilderness, the Bride City [is seen] from a mountain.” From this “mountain” John sees “the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.” Perhaps this mountaintop experience, on later reflection, may have reminded John of the mountaintop experience of the transfiguration (Lk 9:28–36), except that here it is not *Christ* who is transfigured, but Christ’s *church*, adorned in the glory of the exalted Christ as it is displayed as the holy city Jerusalem. (CC p. 609)

in the Spirit. See notes on 1:10; 4:2; 17:3. (CSB)

COMING DOWN - Coming down” does not denote a second descent, but the same as in v 2. These words are the basis for the sermon title, “Here Comes the Bride.” This “coming down” may well indicate that the new heaven and new earth will have some characteristics familiar to us who have lived on earth; in a sense, they will be “down to earth.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

21:11 THE GLORY OF THE LORD – When Christ appears, the saints will be glorified and given resurrected bodies like Christ’s own (Php 3:20–21). Thus, both heaven and its citizens will reflect the divine majesty. (TLSB)

This verse describes the glory of God among the believers in heaven (cf. Is 60:1). The brilliance of the Holy City is beyond description (cf 2 Cor 12:1–4, where Paul writes about the difficulty of putting this into words). The truth of God and his Gospel drives away the darkness of ignorance, misery, guilt, and moral pollution (Hendriksen). Swete relates the glory to the saints themselves (cf. Dan 12:3; Phil 2:16). Others ascribe it to Christ (cf. Luke 2:9). The Gospel is the common denominator of all these views. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

ITS BRILLIANCE – Above in 21:2 the holy city Jerusalem was “prepared like a bride adorned for her husband.” Here in 21:11 John sees that adornment as “the glory of God,” which is her “radiance” (φωστήρ). The church on earth bears “the glory of God” because of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 3:18; Rev 12:1), but it is unseen to the human eye. Now, after the resurrection and the restoration of heaven and earth, the church is adorned with this glory for all to see. “Radiance” (φωστήρ) suggests that “the glory of God” conferred upon the holy city as her “radiance” now shines forth as if it were her own beauty and righteousness and holiness. In classical Greek a φωστήρ, “illuminator, luminary,” was a heavenly body which generated its own light, like a star. In the cosmology of the Bible, God first created “light” (φῶς, LXX Gen 1:3–5) and then the “luminaries” (φωστῆρες, LXX Gen 1:14, 16), which when empowered by the light generate their own light (the sun and stars) or reflect (the moon) and distribute that light. This “radiance” in Rev 21:11 indicates that while initially the glory of God was given to the saints solely because of and through Jesus Christ, who is “*the light*” (τὸ φῶς, Jn 1:4–9; 8:12), in the new age that glory will be the possession of God’s people who (like a “luminary,” φωστήρ) generate their own radiance by which “the glory of God” is distributed, that is, appears and is seen. (CC pp. 609-610)

LIKE A JASPER, CLEAR AS CRYSTAL – This “radiance” (φωστήρ) of the holy city appears like “a most precious stone, like a crystalized jasper” (Rev 21:11), a rare gem which is green in color “but lustrous as crystal.” (CC p. 610)

Precious stone, previously mentioned in connection with God’s radiance. (TLSB)

21:12 HIGH WALL – The holy city Jerusalem “has a large and high wall” (21:12). Usually a wall around a city was for protection and defense. Such physical protection would not be a necessity for the bride of Christ in the new heaven and earth because all her enemies will have been vanquished. (That is the theme of Revelation 17–19; 20:7–10.) For that reason early commentators interpreted the “wall” to be a symbol of God’s care and protection, which insured that the peace and security of his people would last forever. For example, Oecumenius (sixth century) says, “The wall of the saints, or of the church, again is Christ himself, as our defense and surrounding fence and ready help.” That interpretation is supported by OT passages that speak of God as a fortification and wall around his people. For example, Is 26:1 states that the land of Judah has “a mighty city” because God has made salvation her walls. Similarly in Zech 2:4–5 (MT 2:8–9) an angel tells the prophet that Jerusalem will have no walls, for Yahweh himself will be “a wall of fire all around.” However one interprets the “wall” in Rev 21:12, it suggests that in the new heaven and earth God’s people will forever be under God’s gracious protection so that never again will they suffer attacks or be afflicted. Moreover, they will never be tempted by evil or fall into sin and death, as happened to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:8–9; 3:1–19). In the new Eden, that is, “paradise” (Lk 23:43; 2 Cor 12:4; Rev 2:7), this will not happen, for the people of Christ, the new Adam, will forever be in a state of grace and righteousness and innocence (cf. Rom 5:12–21). As John sees the city Jerusalem coming down from God in heaven, the “wall” reminds him of this eternal protection. (CC pp. 610-11)

twelve gates. See Eze 48:30–35. The number 12 probably emphasizes the continuity of the NT church and the OT people of God. See v. 14, where the 12 foundations bear the names of the 12 apostles. (CSB)

ANGELS AT GATES – The twelve angels on the twelve gates are evidently guardians of the gates (cf. Pss 34:7 [MT 34:8]; 91:11; Heb 1:14). In Is 62:6–7 the Lord tells the prophet that he will place “watchmen” or “sentries” (שְׂרָרִים; LXX: φύλακας) on the wall of Jerusalem. These watchmen will continue to be vigilant until the Lord renews Jerusalem and establishes her as the praise of the whole earth. Perhaps on reflection that reference in Isaiah may have come to John’s mind. Certainly these guardian angels would remind John (as did the wall) that no enemy will enter the city ever again to hurt God’s people (see Rev 21:27 below). These twelve angels as a group are unique, for nowhere else in biblical literature is such a group mentioned. (Evidently no group of twelve angels of any kind appears in the pseudepigraphal literature either.) There are groups of seven angels (e.g., 1:20; 8:2; 15:1) but not of twelve. But that twelve are mentioned here in 21:12 is not surprising (despite their uniqueness), for the city has twelve gates patterned after the twelve tribes. And each gate has its own angelic guardian—as already prophetically suggested by both Ezek 48:30–34 and Is 62:6–7 when seen intertextually. As the cherubim protected the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:24), though for a different purpose, so the guardian angels protect the holy city Jerusalem, the new Eden. (CC pp. 612-613)

21:13 (FROM) ON THE EAST – ἀπό—This Greek preposition usually means “from, away from.” English would usually say “toward” or “on” the east, and so on. This use of ἀπό is a Hebraism, reflecting the geographic use of the preposition מִן (see BDB, 1 c). That is, as one comes from the east, there are three gates by which one may enter the city. (CC p. 607)

In Ezek 48:30–34 the prophet in a vision sees a restored and new Jerusalem in the end times, after the final battle of Gog from Magog (Ezekiel 38–39; cf. Rev 20:7–10), and in it Jerusalem has twelve gates in its wall. In Ezekiel’s vision three gates are located in each of the four sides of the wall, three facing the north, three the east, three the south, and three the west. In Ezekiel’s vision, the gates in the wall are named after the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel, which names are then given. In John’s vision the gates in the wall are also named after the “twelve tribes of the sons of Israel” (Rev 21:12), but he does not give the names as Ezekiel does. It was common for ancient Near Eastern cities to have only a single gate because the gate was more vulnerable to attack and was more difficult to defend than the wall. The *twelve gates* of the new Jerusalem “symbolize abundant entrance. Reference to twelve tribes emphasizes the continuity of the NT church with God’s people of OT times.” More than that, the gates also emphasize that the entrance into the city is by the arrangement set by God himself. The naming of the gates after the twelve tribes may also hint at an evangelistic or mission theme as the whole people of God testified to the world about his salvation. That theme would be continued by the reference in 21:14 to the names of the twelve apostles. (CC pp. 611-612)

21:14 TWELVE FOUNDATIONS – The wall of the city rests on “twelve foundation stones,” upon which are the “names of the twelve apostles” (21:14). As Paul describes it in Eph 2:19–22, citizens of God’s household and family “were built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,” which foundation has as its cornerstone Christ Jesus. “The church in a historical sense rests upon the apostles and prophets, that is, upon the faith and labors of those who first proclaimed the gospel message. The juxtaposition of the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles shows the unity of ancient Israel and the NT church.” Thus by means of the wall with its twelve gates John is reminded that, as there has always been only one covenant of grace embracing the entire people of God, those of old by faith in the promise of the Messiah and those by faith in the fulfillment of that promise in Jesus Christ, so now the true Israel of God will be in the new heaven and earth as represented by the new Jerusalem (cf. Rom 4:13–25; Gal 4:21–28). John earlier had seen the twenty-four elders sitting around God and his throne in heaven; they too represent the entire people of God, of both the OT and the NT. (CC p. 612)

The twelve angels on the twelve gates are evidently guardians of the gates (cf. Pss 34:7 [MT 34:8]; 91:11; Heb 1:14). In Is 62:6–7 the Lord tells the prophet that he will place “watchmen” or “sentries” (מִרְמָטִים; LXX: φύλακας) on the wall of Jerusalem. These watchmen will continue to be vigilant until the Lord renews Jerusalem and establishes her as the praise of the whole earth. Perhaps on reflection that reference in Isaiah may have come to John’s mind. Certainly these guardian angels would remind John (as did the wall) that no enemy will enter the city ever again to hurt God’s people (see Rev 21:27 below). These twelve angels as a group are unique, for nowhere else in biblical literature is such a group mentioned. (Evidently no group of twelve angels of any kind appears in the pseudepigraphal literature either.) There are groups of seven angels (e.g., 1:20; 8:2; 15:1) but not of twelve. But that twelve are mentioned here in 21:12 is not surprising (despite their uniqueness), for the city has twelve gates patterned after the twelve tribes. And each gate has its own angelic guardian—as already prophetically suggested by both Ezek 48:30–34 and Is 62:6–7 when seen intertextually. As the cherubim protected the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:24), though for a different purpose, so the guardian angels protect the holy city Jerusalem, the new Eden. (CC pp. 612-613)

21:21 CITY WAS OF PURE GOLD – Gold indicates that the city and its main street convey the supreme royalty of God’s glory. (CC pp. 616-17)

21:22 DID NOT SEE A TEMPLE – God gave the tabernacle and temples in order to mediate His presence on earth. In heaven, however, His people will see Him face-to-face and experience Him directly. Thus, a temple will be unnecessary. (TLSB)

John says regarding the holy city Jerusalem, that is, the people of God living in the new heaven and earth, “I did not see a temple in it, for Yahweh, the [only] God, the Almighty, is its temple together with the Lamb” (21:22). The saints of God in their state of righteousness and holiness and perfection after the resurrection can now look directly into the face of God. No longer does God have to hide his glory from their view. No

longer does he have to shield his people from the brilliance of his overpowering holiness and awesomeness (cf. Deut 31:17–18; Is 64:7 [MT 64:6]). For God can now directly and personally live in the midst of his saints with his glory. With sin and every evil having passed away, there is no longer a need for a tabernacle or temple to mediate and temper God's presence. For God the Father himself together with the Lord Christ is now that temple. The city itself (that is, the people of God) is now the Holy of Holies in which God dwells. What Paul said in 2 Cor 6:16, that the believers in Christ living in the present age are "the temple of the living God," is now fulfilled in all its completeness and openness (cf. 1 Cor 3:16–17; 6:19–20). Andreas (sixth century) asks in his Greek commentary, "For what need is there of a tangible temple in the [city] having God as the guard and shelter, [God] in whom we live and move and exist? For this [God] is both the temple and the dwelling of the saints, as he dwells in them and walks about among them, even as he had promised." (CC p.618)

The city itself has been described as a holy of holies, as its cubic form suggests (v 16). Yet God and the Lamb are the temple; no lambs (for sacrifice), but the Lamb (Poellot). In "the Lord God Almighty," "Lord" stands for the personal name of God Yahweh—indicating his presence in grace, and the word "almighty" indicates his presence in power. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

21:23 DOES NOT NEED SUN OR MOON – No created light will be needed because the glory of the Lord will always be present. Therefore there will be no night (v. 25).

Because God Himself is "light" (Ps 36:9; 1Jn 1:5), there is no need for any other source of illumination in heaven. There, people bask in the unmediated glory of His aura. (TLSB)

"And the city does not have need of the sun nor of the moon" (Rev 21:23) for light. God himself by means of his "glory" will illuminate her, and "her lamp is the Lamb" (21:23). John is not referring to the physical sun and moon but rather is describing what it will be like for God's people, who are the new Jerusalem, the Holy of Holies, to live in God's holy presence. "John is not supplying his readers with information about future astrological changes but setting forth by means of accepted apocalyptic imagery the splendor which will radiate from the presence of God and the Lamb." Will there be astrophysical luminaries in the new heaven and earth? If the physical universe of the new heaven and earth will be similar to that of the first created heaven and earth, the conjectured answer would be yes, but John does not deal with this mystery. (CC pp. 618-619)

The prophet Isaiah used similar language when he spoke about the restored "city of Yahweh, Zion, the holy one of Israel" (Is 60:14). He says that "the sun will no longer be your light by day, nor will the moon by its brightness shine on you, for Yahweh will be your everlasting light" (Is 60:19). In the restored Jerusalem God would be the true light of his people. When this verse is applied to the life of God's people on this earth, it does

not refer to the physical sun and moon, for these two physical luminaries still fulfill the original function for which they were created and established by God: to govern the passage of time and to furnish light for the physical well-being of daily living (Gen 1:14–19). Similarly, Christians affirm that Jesus Christ is “the true light ... which is coming into the world” (Jn 1:9) and is “the light of the world” (Jn 8:12; cf. 3:19; 12:35). Jesus Christ is the light of the Christian’s life, which illuminates his pilgrimage through this present earthly life. The believer does not need (and cannot employ) the physical sun for spiritual guidance, though the need for the astrophysical sun is still present for his physical well-being. In the new heaven and earth, God in his glory and Jesus Christ as the lamp will be seen directly and experienced personally as the eternal light. (CC p. 619)

Cf. Is 60:19; John 1:4; 8:12; Christ is the light of this world and the next, the “sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2). Note the equality of the Lamb with the Father. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

21:24 NATIONS WALK BY ITS LIGHT – Cf Is 60:1–6. Emphasizes the complete fulfillment of God’s plan to save all people (cf Rv 7:9). This suggests the transformation rather than the annihilation of the old orders. (TLSB)

So wonderful is the light of the glory of God and of his Christ that John sees that “the nations will walk about by her light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory into her,” the holy city (Rev 21:24). In eschatological terms, John here in 21:24 sees the consummation and final fulfillment of the prophecy in Is 60:1–6 concerning nations and kings who will see the glory of Yahweh coming to his people. A preview and type of this ultimate fulfillment occurred in the journey of the Magi from the east to worship the Christ Child (Mt 2:1–12). Commentators differ in their interpretation concerning these nations and kings in Rev 21:24. Some maintain that in Is 60:1–3 the prophet envisioned heathen Gentiles and their kings living outside Jerusalem after the restoration of Israel, and John included those words in his quote from Isaiah even though those words are inappropriate in their new context in Revelation, since John is referring to the new Jerusalem in the new heaven and earth. Others suggest that this verse indicates a universal salvation. Lenski is correct when he says that “ ‘the nations’ are the glorified saints,” and that the term “the kings of the earth” is used to “convey the idea that not all these powers of the earth were won for Satan but that the Lamb, too, won many of their number for himself.” This is certainly indicated by John in Rev 5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 22:2, where the church’s ministry extends to all nations and to kings (Rev. 10:11; cf. Mt. 28:19-20; Lk. 21:12-13; Acts 9:15) and the church consists of people from all nations. Rev 21:24a is quoting Is 60:3, where the emphasis is the inclusion of all kinds of Gentiles, in addition to Israelites, in the kingdom of God. That the kings of the earth bring their glory into the new Jerusalem as tribute indicates the supreme royalty of Christ, who is “King of kings” (Rev 17:14; 19:16; cf. 1:5; 15:3). While “kings” in Revelation usually are unbelieving enemies of Christ and his church (e.g., 6:15; 16:12, 14; 18:3), the context of Is 60:3 suggests that the “kings” are Gentile rulers who join the true Israelites in turning to the God of Israel and believing in him (e.g., Is 60:9). That

interpretation is reinforced by the fulfillment of Is 60:1–6 in the Magi and the gifts they brought to the Christ Child as tokens of their worship (Mt 2:1–12). “Kings” may also allude to the royal reign of *all Christians* with Christ (Rev 5:10; 20:4, 6; 22:5). (CC pp. 619-620)

While some think “the nations” in v 24 refers to the heathen, the heavenly context of this word can only mean that Christians from every nation are meant. John here uses Old Testament language, since an imperial city should receive tribute from nations and kings. The verse describes the consummation of Is 60:3, 5, the OT text for Epiphany. While the Magi, representatives of the Gentile nations, fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy at Christ’s first advent, the prophecy now comes true on a much larger scale. But “the nations” and “kings” later in this verse cannot be stretched to teach universalism, although the universality of grace may be emphasized. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

21:25 NO NIGHT...GATES – With evil once and for all vanquished, there is no need for security measures. (TLSB)

The “gates” of the city “will never be closed by day, for night will not be there” (Rev 21:25). As stated above in 21:12, 14, the city’s wall represents God’s surrounding, protective presence. Here in 21:25 the inability of any evil force or danger to threaten or hurt God’s people is emphasized again, this time by the open “gates” which never are closed, and by the fact that “night” is totally absent. City gates were usually closed at night (e.g., Josh 2:5–7). “Night” here represents the spiritual darkness of sin and evil (cf. Jn 11:10; 12:35; 1 Thess 5:5). Because there is no darkness of sin and the suffering and terror of eternal death that sin generates, there is no need for the gates in the wall of the city to be closed. It will always be day because of the eternal light of God’s presence (Rev 21:23–24). Rev 21:25 quotes Is 60:11, which promises the restored Jerusalem that “your gates will always be open; day and night they will never be shut.” The purpose of them remaining open is so that through them the wealth of nations and their kings may be brought into the city in a worshipful procession. (CC p. 621)

Cf. Is 60:20, John 10:9; the doors never shut because there is no danger of invasion in heaven. This is the opposite of Matt 25:10, where the door to heaven is shut to unbelievers. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

21:26 GLORY AND HONOR OF THE NATIONS – This all that they did for the Lamb while they were here on the old earth, for which they receive reward in the Eternal City, namely the varying degrees of glory. (Poellot p. 287)

John sees that the nations and their kings (Rev 21:24) “will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into her” (21:26), that is, into the holy city. In the new heaven and earth, all peoples and all nations and all kings—yea, the entire creation and all the heavenly hosts—will honor and praise God and the Lamb (cf. 4:1–5:14). (CC p. 621)

Cf. Is 60:5; this verse continues v 24. In heaven, God will be glorified by the presence of people who spent their lives honoring him through their labors, whether in the church, art, literature, science, etc. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

21:27 IMPURE...SHAMEFUL – Another reminder that future citizenship in heaven is secured through repentance and holiness. (TLSB)

And never again will “any unclean thing” or anyone “doing an abominable thing and a lie”—any evil whatsoever—be able to enter, to tarnish, to savage God’s people and his creation (21:27). “Unclean” was a category in the OT laws of purity (κοινός, as also in Acts 10:14, reflecting κηϋ in, for example, Lev 11:4–8). While these purity laws were fulfilled and abolished in Christ (e.g., κοινός in Mk 7:2, 5; Acts 10:28), in Rev 21:27 “unclean” has the theological sense of something abhorrent to God, as indicated by the synonyms “abominable” (βδέλυγμα, as also in Rev 17:4–5; also Mt 24:15) and “a lie, falsehood” (ψεῦδος, as also in Rev 14:5; 22:15), which is characteristic of the devil (Jn 8:44; 2 Thess 2:9, 11). The short description in Rev 21:27 of those excluded will be expanded in 22:15 (see also 21:8). (CC p. 621)

Lamb’s book of life. See note on 3:5. (CSB)

Only the elect, whose names are written in the book of life [Revelation 21:27], are saved. Therefore, how can we know, or why and how can we perceive who the elect are and who can and should receive this teaching for comfort? In this matter we should not judge according to our reason, or according to the Law or from any outward appearance.... If we want to think about our eternal election to salvation helpfully, we must in every way hold strongly and firmly to this truth: just as the preaching of repentance is universal, so also the promise of the Gospel is universal, that is, it belongs to all people” (FC SD XI 25–26, 28). Luther: “To be sure, all sins have been remitted and covered, but they have not yet been completely cleansed away. Not only do the dregs of lust, pride, hatred, wrath, and other desires cling to us, but also inner evils and hidden stains, doubts about God, unbelief, impatience, and murmuring, which do not come out into the open until the conscience is troubled by the Law and by the terrors of sin. Although we pay no attention to these things and do not sob because of such a disgraceful fall, yet God sees them. Therefore He tries to purge our impure nature. This is what He thinks: ‘You have been enlightened and baptized; but you still stink, and your flesh is full of many great vices. Therefore I must cleanse it, for that which is unclean and polluted shall not enter the kingdom of heaven’ (cf. Rev. 21:27)” (AE 7:229). (TLSB)

Revelation has a number of descriptions of those who will enter the eternal abode of God (Rev. 2:7, 10; 3:21; 7:14; 14:4-5). Here they are not described according to any of their own characteristics or actions; they are designated by God’s own action for their sake: they are “those who have been written in the book of life of the Lamb” (21:27). Their names are engraved in the mind and heart of God and his Christ, the shepherd of his flock (cf. Jn 10:3, 11, 27–30; 20:11–16). (CC p. 621)

23 In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. 24 Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. 25 “Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father. 26 In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. 27 No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. 28 I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.” 29 Then Jesus’ disciples said, “Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. 30 Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God.” 31 “You believe at last!”^a Jesus answered. 32 “But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. 33 “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

16:23-33 Jesus now comes to the end of his farewell discourse (Jn 14–16). Shortly he will offer his High Priestly Prayer (Jn 17) and be betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane (18:1–11). Jesus will soon be going to the Father (14:28), but he leaves his disciples with the guarantee that the time is coming when he will no longer use figures of speech but will talk plainly about the Father (16:25). In only a few hours, the apostles “will be scattered” (16:32). Jesus will be betrayed, arrested, crucified, and will die, yet he reassures the apostles that he has already overcome the world (16:33). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

16:23 *you will no longer ask me anything.* Seems to mean asking for information (rather than asking in prayer), which would not be necessary after the resurrection. Jesus then moved on to the subject of prayer. However, Jesus may have been saying that his disciples previously had been praying to Christ, but after his death and resurrection they were to go directly to the Father and pray in Christ’s name (see vv. 24, 26–27 and notes). (CSB)

After Christ’s resurrection and ascension, the disciples will pray directly to their heavenly Father. (TLSB)

erōtaō, “to ask,” in this phrase means “to ask a question.” Jesus may have been suggesting that when he reappears after his death and resurrection, the truth of what he said and claimed about himself will be clearly visible. *aiteō*, “to ask,” while roughly synonymous with *erōtaō*, refers to the disciples having the ability following Jesus’ death and resurrection to ask the Father directly (see v 24). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

It would not be needed, as it then was, that they should make inquires of him. The Holy Ghost would give them all needful instruction. (CB)

In that day, with the coming of the revelation through the Spirit, there will no longer be need to ask the Lord any questions. Though the personal intercourse between them and their Master had terminated, they would have the benefit and the certainty of a direct communion through the work of the Spirit. (Kretzmann)

name. See notes on 2:23; 14:13. (CSB)

The Spirit in John's Gospel

John frequently describes the work of the Holy Spirit in his Gospel. Study the following chart to receive a clearer understanding of the Holy Spirit's work in the lives of the apostles and in your life. (TLSB)

Description

Meaning

Dove (1:32)Doves (pigeons) were sacrificed in the temple as part of the cleansing rituals of the OT (Lv 5:5–10; 15:13–15). Christ gives you the Spirit in Baptism, which cleanses you from all sin (Ti 3:4–7). (TLSB)

Wind (3:8)The Spirit hovered over the face of the waters at the beginning of creation (Gn 1:2) and through God's Word brought forth life. Just as wind moves invisibly and uncontrollably, the Spirit works when and where He pleases through God's Word and Baptism to give life to you and all believers in Christ. (TLSB)

God (4:24)The Spirit is not a thing or a power but God Himself (notice how Jesus uses the personal pronoun *He* to refer to the Spirit: 14:26 [based on Gk text]; 15:26; 16:13). You worship the triune God in and through the Spirit of God. (TLSB)

Words (6:63)At the beginning of the Gospel, John used *Word* to describe Jesus. Now Jesus uses *words* to describe the Spirit, through whom He gives life. The Spirit of Jesus works in your life through the Word of God. (TLSB)

Rivers of Living Water (7:38–39)Jesus refers to the promise given through

Isaiah that God would satisfy the thirst of His people (Is 58:11). Because you are a believer, the Spirit dwells in and flows from you, welling up to eternal life (Jn 4:10, 13–14). (TLSB)

Helper (14:16, 26; 15:26) The Spirit sent by the Father and Jesus will teach the disciples and remind them of Jesus' words. This would include the way the Spirit guided the apostles and inspired them to record the books of the NT. These passages also describe the inner workings of the Holy Trinity on your behalf. (TLSB)

Spirit of Truth (15:26; 16:13) The spirit of falsehood, at work in the sinful hearts of humanity, would deceive the disciples. Therefore, Jesus sends the Spirit of truth to guide the disciples into all truth. Note well that the Spirit does not speak on His own. He speaks on behalf of the Father and Jesus and testifies about Jesus. Note again that Jesus binds the work of the Spirit to His Word. (TLSB)

Holy (20:22) The Spirit makes you holy through the forgiveness of sins you receive in the Gospel. Just as Christ called and sent the apostles to proclaim this forgiveness, He calls and sends pastors to proclaim publicly forgiveness of sins (Absolution). (TLSB)

Four passages in John's Gospel describe the work of the Holy Spirit in an even more intimate way than does the Old Testament: 1:33; 7:39; 14:17; 20:22. Whereas the Old Testament repeatedly spoke of the Holy Spirit coming upon someone, Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit dwelling in a believer. The Spirit dwells in believers through their Baptism into Christ (cf Ezk 36:25–27 for a prophecy of this), through the Lord's Supper, and in the revelation of God's love and salvation in Jesus Christ. In this way, John's Gospel emphasizes the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, supporting and comforting believers with Christ's gift of peace. (TLSB)

God Is Three-in-One

God Is One

When Moses asks God for His name, God replies, "I AM WHO I AM.... Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you' " (Ex 3:14). He is the only true God. All other gods are imaginary, idols that mislead people from the true God. God is truth; idols are lies. God calls

people to faith, while idols confirm lost souls in their estrangement from the Creator. God challenges people to live holy lives. In contrast, idols give permission for sinners to sin with abandon. Even though the world thinks that many gods and many lords exist (as Paul notes in 1Co 8:5), only one God truly lives (as Paul goes on to confirm in v 6). (TLSB)

In His High Priestly Prayer (Jn 17), Jesus confesses the fundamental truth that only one God exists (v 3). He describes eternal life as knowing the only true God and the One He has sent, Jesus Christ. He also talks about God as His Father and speaks about the Holy Spirit as someone distinct from the Father and the Son. (TLSB)

God in Three Persons

Jesus often speaks of God as Father. (John records uses of “Father” some 60 times in chs 12–21.) He mentions God the Holy Spirit five times in this section. In prayer, Jesus also calls Himself the Son of God (17:1). Both the evangelist (20:31) and Jesus’ enemies (19:7) recognize the fact that Jesus claims a unique Sonship with the Father. His relationship with the Father is so close that He is able to say, “I and the Father are one” (10:30). (TLSB)

In 3:16–18, Jesus identifies Himself as the “only begotten” Son (the translation “only Son” somewhat misses the point). The Father “begets” the Son and always has. Yet the Son is truly God (1:1). John even calls Him the “only begotten God” (1:18, author’s translation). The Spirit, on the other hand, proceeds from the Father (15:26) and the Son (Rm 8:9–11; Ac 16:7; Php 1:19; 1Pt 1:11). (TLSB)

In this way, God reveals Himself as one God. The Son of God is begotten of the Father from eternity. No matter how far back we look, the Son lives with the Father. Likewise, the Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son. The Spirit carries out the will of the Father by leading people to the Son (16:13). (TLSB)

Triune Savior

God’s ways are higher than our ways. Though He reveals Himself to us in the Scriptures, we cannot fully grasp who He is. But a mathematic illustration may help us begin to understand. $1 + 1 + 1$ cannot equal 1. However, $1 \times 1 \times 1$ does equal 1! (TLSB)

Just as multiplication is a higher form of math than addition, so God’s ways are higher than ours. Our heavenly Father does not ask us to understand His triune nature. He asks us to trust in Him and leave the details to Him. (TLSB)

As you ponder the mystery of who God is, also turn your attention to what God does. God has not revealed His triune nature in order to confuse you. He desires to show you the many aspects of His love and work of salvation. (TLSB)

16:24 *Until now.* Previously they had asked the Father or Christ, but they had not asked the Father in Christ’s name. (CSB)

The disciples had asked questions and favors of Jesus but had not prayed to the Father in Jesus’ name. (TLSB)

ouk ēitēsate ouden en tōi onomati mou, “you have asked nothing in my name.” Up until this time, the disciples had not asked for anything in Jesus’ name. But now the disciples are urged: *aiteite kai lēmpsesthe*, “ask, and you will receive.” The disciples would no

longer have Jesus with them, so they must seek his help in a new way, by asking the Father in Jesus' name. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

They had not been accustomed before this to pray in the name of Christ; but after this they would be, and for his sake God would bestow whatever they needed. (CB)

And solemnly Jesus assures them that their relation to the Father will be of a nature permitting them to go directly to Him with all their desires and needs, for their prayers will all be made in the name of Jesus. Because the atonement of Jesus has effected peace with the Father, has restored the believers to their position as children of God, they have but to refer to Jesus and His work, to appeal to His redemption, to be assured of the hearing of their prayers. The work of the Mediator and Savior had not been completed, and therefore the disciples had not prayed in His name. But now the road to the Father's heart has been opened, and they shall entreat, they shall ask, knowing that they will receive, and thus have also the fulfillment of their joy. The efficacy of prayer depends upon faith in the Savior as the Substitute of mankind, by whom we have free access to the Father. (Kretzmann)

your joy. See note on 15:11. (CSB)

16:16–24 Christ promises to return after His resurrection and turn the disciples' sorrow into joy. Human sorrow can become an expression of self-pity, hindering genuine prayer for God's help and deliverance. Yet, God knows how to turn our sorrow into joy, and He promises to hear our prayers for Jesus' sake. • Hear us, O heavenly Father, and give us joy in Jesus' name! Amen. (TLSB)

16:25 *I have been speaking figuratively.* Throughout the discourse, not just in the immediately preceding words. (CSB)

en paroimiais, "in figures of speech." Jesus had been speaking to his disciples in rather obscure language, not necessarily in metaphor or in parables, but in such a way that the meaning of what he spoke was ambiguous. However, that time was coming to an end. Following the resurrection, Jesus "opened [his disciples'] minds to understand the Scriptures" (Lk 24:45). What had been veiled in figurative speech now would be revealed to them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

Or in parables – somewhat obscurely, and in such manner that they did not fully understand his meaning. (CB)

In order to bring this truth home to the disciples still more strongly, the Lord frankly tells them that His teaching has been, to a large extent, in proverbial, parabolic sayings. But the hour is coming, after He will have entered into His glory, when He will speak to them without pictures or difficult figures, through the work of the Spirit. (Kretzmann)

a time is coming. After the resurrection. (CSB)

This would be after his resurrection, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. (CB)

TELL YOU PLAINLY – He would more plainly instruct them by his Spirit, and they would more fully understand his truth. (CB)

Then He will also teach them, announce to them plainly, what is meant by knowing the Father, by having the right understanding of His love and mercy. At that time prayer in the name of Jesus will be so strong, so efficacious, that there will not even be need of His special intercession for them. This is necessary, as a matter of course, to establish the right relation between God and the believers. Cf. Rom. 8:34. (Kretzmann)

16:26-27 “I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf.” Jesus has urged the disciples to pray to the Father in his name, yet he does not want them to think of God as being distant, as if they must bring their prayers to him first, and he in turn takes them to Father, thus restricting the believer’s access to the Father. Instead, Jesus tells them of the close relationship they have with his Father: “the Father himself loves you” (v 27). Jesus does intercede for humankind (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25; 1 Jn 2:1), but his great act of intercession, death for the world’s sin, will soon reestablish mankind’s direct relationship to God. The Father is now eager to hear our prayers. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

16:26 *in my name*. See notes on 2:23; 14:13. (CSB)

I am not saying that I will ask. Not a contradiction of Ro 8:34; Heb 7:25; 1Jn 2:1. Those passages mean that Christ’s presence in heaven as the crucified and risen Lord is itself an intercession. Here the teaching is that there will be no need for him to make petitions in our behalf. (CSB)

That is, I say not this simply, but something more. The Savior does not mean to deny that he will intercede with the Father for his disciples; but rather to lead their minds beyond this truth, which he had frequently stated, to another: that the Father is one with him in loving them, so that his intercession for them must prevail. (CB)

16:27 *the Father himself loves you*. Christ is explaining why the disciples can come directly to the Father in prayer. It is because the disciples have loved and trusted in Jesus, and in love God will hear their requests in Jesus’ name. But so great is the Father’s love which has been evoked by the love of the believers in Christ and by their firm belief that He came into the world to reveal the Father, to be His Ambassador, that the Father will deal directly with His children and will grant their prayers. And this the disciples should once more be assured of: Jesus went forth from the Father and came into the world to carry into effect the plan of salvation for all mankind. And now He leaves the world and goes to the Father, thus signifying that the work which He intended to perform has been done. That fact establishes the relation between God and the believers, and renders all their prayers in the name of Jesus acceptable to Him. (Kretzmann)

16:28 *exēlthon para tou patros*, “I came from the Father.” Some manuscripts omit these words, thus v 27 and v 28 would run together “and have believed I came from God, and have come into the world.” Yet the longer reading seems more in keeping with John’s pattern of repetition. Here we have a summary of Jesus’ earthly mission. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

16:29-30 *ide*, “ah” or “behold,” is used as a deictic particle to draw attention. After many “figures of speech” (v 25), the apostles understood what Jesus said in his last statement (v 28). Actually, they may have mistaken his words in v 25, “The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech,” to be occurring at that very moment, as Jesus spoke clearly about his coming and returning to the Father. This understanding leads them to reaffirm their confession that Jesus “came from God” (v 30). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

16:29 *without figures of speech*. See v. 25 and note. (CSB)

The disciples thought that they understood, but their understanding remained inadequate. (TLSB)

The last statements of Jesus had been so clear and unmistakable, of the love of the Father, of Christ’s coming from, and going to, the Father, that the disciples thought they understood Him perfectly. There was neither parable nor proverb in these sayings, and they had the conviction, which they also freely expressed, that He had a full knowledge of all things, and that His teaching was free from all obscurity. (Kretzmann)

16:30-32 Disciples of Christ may at some times possess and manifest strong confidence in him and at others act as if they had none: were it not for his grace, all would utterly forsake him and perish. (CB)

16:30 *believe that you came from God*. Two recurring themes of this Gospel: believing (see note on 1:7) and Jesus’ coming from God (see notes on 4:34; 17:3, 8). (CSB)

Although their faith was still deficient, the disciples believed that Jesus’ knowledge proved His divine origin. (TLSB)

He had in the last few verses so fully met their difficulties about his meaning in verse 16, and that without stating them, that they were more than ever convinced of his omniscience and Messiahship. (CB)

The implication of the disciples is that they need not wait for some future manifestation and revelation, when everything would be clear to their minds. They were persuaded now of His divine Sonship. But the enthusiasm of the disciples was premature; the time of Pentecost had not yet come; they must first experience sorrow and suffering. (Kretzmann)

16:31 *arti pisteuete*, “Do you now believe?” The disciples believed that Jesus was from God, but Jesus knows that all too soon they will completely fail to live up to this confession. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

16:32 BUT THE TIME IS COMING - *idou erchetai hōra kai elēluthen*, “Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come.” Once again, *hē hōra*, the hour, has come, but it is now even closer than the hour for speaking plainly in v 25. His hour *elēluthen*, “has come,” perfect active indicative. Jesus will soon be abandoned by his disciples, yet even in that betrayal, Jesus knows “the Father is with me.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

you will be scattered. The disciples had faith, but not enough to stand firm in face of disaster. Jesus knew they would fail; however, his church is not built on people’s strength but on God’s ability to use people even after they have failed. (CSB)

Jesus tells them that the test of their faith, of which they now seemed so sure, would come very soon. And the result would be most disappointing. They would be scattered, they would flee from His side, leaving Him all alone in His great Passion. Their own interests, their life and safety, would claim their first consideration. So would they fail Him in the critical hour. (Kretzmann)

EACH TO HIS OWN HOME – The disciples would temporarily abandon Jesus in the crisis to come. (TLSB)

Notwithstanding the strong faith in him which they had expressed, they would soon desert him, and return to their houses or places of abode; and so far as human friends were concerned, he would be left alone. (CB)

WITH ME – Although the Father would forsake Christ on the cross (cf Mt 27:46) as Christ became sin for us (2 Cor 5:21), the Father remained faithful to His Son and His mission in a way that the disciples did not (cf Ac 2:24; 10:40). (TLSB)

16:33 I HAVE TOLD YOU - *tauta*, “these things,” refers to the entire farewell discourse. Jesus had spoken “these things,” elaborating them in great detail, so that his disciples may have peace (Jn 14:27). In the hours before Jesus’ Passion, his love for his disciples is unwavering. He knows that they “will have tribulation,” yet he leaves them with words of comfort: “But take heart; I have overcome the world.” *nenikēka*, “have overcome.” Though it has yet to happen, it is as good as completed; Jesus has conquered the world through death and resurrection, just as he has defeated death and Satan. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

Persecution and other troubles Christians face. (TLSB)

Notice the contrasts: between “in me” and “in this world” (see note on 1:10) and between “peace” and “trouble.”

I have overcome. Just before his death Jesus affirms his final victory. (CSB)

Persecution and other troubles Christians face. (TLSB)

Overcome all your enemies, and obtained for you eternal redemption from their power. (CB)

16:25–33 The disciples confidently claim they understand Jesus’ parting words, but Jesus utters the sober prediction that they will soon abandon Him. Those boasting about spiritual maturity stand in danger of succumbing to human pride and unbelief. When we face temptation and trouble in this world, we can take heart that Christ has overcome the world for our sake. • O Christ, in crisis situations, give me the peace only You can give. Amen. (TLSB)