

Third Sunday of Easter

FIRST READING – Acts 9:1-22

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.³ As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.⁶ "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."⁷ The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone.⁸ Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus.⁹ For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.¹⁰ In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered.¹¹ The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying.¹² In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."¹³ "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem.¹⁴ And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."¹⁵ But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."¹⁷ Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."¹⁸ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized,¹⁹ and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

9:1-22 Luke's purpose, the schematic for the second volume of his work, and the arrangement of the elements of his story are already revealed in the pattern set in Acts 1:8. Six summary statements (6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31) signal closure of one phase of the Word's advancement from Jerusalem to Rome (and beyond) and the beginning of another. Luke selectively chooses events which portray the impact of the risen and exalted Christ on the world. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 8, Part 1)

In the section 9:32–12:24 the Word goes forth to the Gentiles. Sandwiched between the account of the Ethiopian eunuch's conversion (8:26–40) and that of Cornelius (10:1–11:18) is the story of the conversion of St. Paul. Acts 9:1–22 is that story, with its dramatic rehearsal of one of the most astounding events in Christian history. "No single event," writes F. F. Bruce, "apart from the Christ-event itself, has proved so determinant for the course of Christian history as the conversion and commissioning of Paul" (*Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, 75). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 8, Part 1)

9:1-2 *Search and Destroy*: The chapter begins "But Saul, still (*eti*) breathing threats and murder." The definite article before Saul (called anaphora "pointing back"—BDF §260) and the use of *eti* point back to 8:1–3. Saul was a key figure in the "great persecution" which broke out against the church following the death of Stephen. Paul tried to destroy the church, and aggressively so, going house by house to arrest and to imprison believers. With authorization from the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem (9:1), Saul sought the extradition of Christians from Damascus (150 miles from Jerusalem) threatening to imprison and kill them presumably for their offenses against the law. Note that while opponents of the Christians called them a sect (*hairesin*—Acts 24:14), the believers referred to themselves as "the Way" (*hē odos*—used absolutely, only in Acts, at 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14; and 24:22). Note also *hopōs* with the aorist

subjunctive *agapēi* and the conditional clause *ean* with aorist subjunctive *heurēi* to refer to something which was pending in past time (see BDF §373 [3]). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 8, Part 1)

The church stands on the cusp of its extraordinary missionary expansion, bursting from the boundary of Judea to the Gentile world that hungered for salvation. (Emperor Augustus was forecast by the ancient world to be a savior.) For Luke, the Gospel is a message to be set on the stage of the whole universe (Arthur A. Just Jr., *Luke 1:1–9:50*, Concordia Commentary [St. Louis: Concordia, 1996] 106). The Pauline mission expansion starts on a dismal note of brutal repression and convicted unbelief by Saul. The Sanhedrin's power of extradition is documented by Flavius Josephus (*Antiq.* 14.10.2). The Way was the earliest name for the followers of Jesus the Messiah. The Way and the Messiah were indistinguishable. To be in him was to be on the way (Jn 14:6). Damascus would have had several synagogues of the Diaspora. It is not surprising then that fleeing followers of the Way (Acts 8:1) should arrive in Damascus. This text (9:1–22) is paralleled in Acts 22:3–16 and 26:9–18 and confirms the paradigmatic character of the conversion of Paul (cf Phil 4:9). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 14, Part 1)

9:1 Saul. Introduced at the stoning of Stephen (7:58), he was born in Tarsus and trained under Gamaliel (22:3). See note on Php 3:4–14. (CSB)

murderous threats. We do not know that Saul was directly involved in the death of anyone other than Stephen (8:1), but there appear to have been similar cases (22:4; 26:10). (CSB)

Saul was intoxicated with hatred. We do not have a specific report that he actually killed Christians, though those he imprisoned were executed (22:4) (TLSB)

“Still breathing out murderous threats” refers us back to Saul’s dragging Christians off to jail in Acts 8:1–3 and his part in the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:54–8:1). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 2, Part 2)

high priest. Probably Caiaphas (see note on 4:6) and the members of the Sanhedrin, who had authority over Jews both in Judea and elsewhere. (CSB)

9:2 Damascus. Located in the Roman province of Syria, it was the nearest important city outside Palestine. It also had a large Jewish population. The distance from Jerusalem to Damascus was about 150 miles, four to six days’ travel. (CSB)

Saul was intent on halting the spread of the Gospel. We are not told which disciple spread the message to Damascus, a Syrian city on a plateau (2,300 ft above sea level). It was watered by the rivers Abana and Pharpar (2Ki 5:12). (TLSB)

the Way. A name for Christianity occurring a number of times in Acts (16:17; 18:25–26; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22; see 2Pe 2:2). Jesus called himself “the way” (Jn 14:6). (CSB)

Name for Christianity; only in Acts. The origin of the term remains obscure. (TLSB)

The term *tēs hodou*, “the Way,” refers to the early church uniquely in Acts (here and 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). At Acts 19:23 Luke assumes the reader knows the term, but since the speeches of chapters 22 and 24 are directed to the Jews and Felix, it is apparent that others also used the title to refer to the church. Michaelis argues that the term stems from “the ways which God Himself takes. In 18:25f the reference is to his whole plan of salvation, in 13:10 to its fulfillment through mission” (*TDNT* 5.90). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 2, Part 2)

prisoners to Jerusalem. Where the full authority of the Sanhedrin could be exercised in trial for either acquittal or death. (CSB)

9:3-9 *Abrupt Interruption:* At high noon (22:6) on his way to Damascus, Saul was stopped in his tracks by the risen Christ through a sudden and great (22:6) flash of light (here *peristraptō* and in 26:13 *perilampō*) and a voice (*phōnē*—cf. 7:31; 10:13; Lk 3:22; Jn 12:28). Note what BDF calls epanadiplosis, repetition of a word for emphasis: “Saul, Saul” (§493 [1]). In the Old Testament, the “voice” (the rabbinic “Bath Qol,” or “Daughter of the Voice”) was characteristic of divine revelation (e.g., Ex. 3:1–6; Is. 6:8). Saul was physically driven to the ground by the force of the revelation of God’s glory. The voice of the risen Jesus, whom Saul first calls “sir” or “Lord”, makes it clear that Paul’s persecution was not merely against the church, but against the person of Jesus himself. Thus, Saul’s zeal for the cause of God (in his view) had turned into an attack on God who raised Jesus from the dead. He now comes face to face with the sovereign and gracious will of the risen Lord. He is now in no position to continue his plans, incapacitated by blindness and fear. He was literally “apprehended” (*katelēmphthēn*) by Christ (Phil 3:12), passive and helpless like a little child. Note the following from Ernst Haenchen’s commentary (*The Acts of the Apostles* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971], 322–23): “Saul is now thrown on the . . . guidance of the Lord. He who a moment ago was so powerful has now become utterly powerless The Christophany is over, the earthly action proceeds. Saul is lifted to his feet, being incapable of rising by himself. . . . Such a pitiful state in which the terror of the Christians makes its entry.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 8, Part 1)

In his letters Paul viewed the “Damascus Road” encounter as an appearance of the risen Christ (1 Cor 9:1; 15:8; Gal 1:16), not a psychological experience. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 8, Part 1)

Some interpreters treat Saul’s experience as a model for Christian conversion, as though every person has to experience a crisis in order to become a Christian. This is misleading. Though God can and does work in people’s lives through crises, conversion is always the work of the Holy Spirit through the means of grace. Saul’s conversion actually takes place in vv 17–18 as he receives God’s Word and Sacrament. Let no one question your salvation because you came to faith quietly, without some dramatic experience. What matters is trust in Jesus as the Savior, which is truly what made Saul a Christian. (TLSB)

9:3-6 What first transpires is called the Damascus Road experience of Paul, perhaps not yet a “conversion.” The Lord begins only as a threat to the threatening Saul. The Law must do its peculiar work. At high noon (22:6; 26:13) the Lord comes to rescue his body, the church, of which he is the head. Both the repeated address, “Saul, Saul,” and the prostration of the apostle are characteristic of divine intervention and self-revelation (1 Sam 3:4; Ex 3:4). Jesus uses the divine self-designation *ejgwv eijmi* to identify himself to the apostle, recollecting the call of Moses (Ex 3:14). Paul, as one abnormally born (1 Cor 15:8), was confronted by the resurrected Christ in that moment. While the response, *kuvrie*, “sir,” may be ambiguous, still Saul immediately sees the implications of this revelation in confessing the one who has revealed himself (9:20, 22). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 14, Part 1)

9:3 *a light from heaven.* “About noon” (26:13). (CSB)

The Lord often used elements of nature to serve His purpose. (TLSB)

9:4 *why do you persecute me?* To persecute the church is to persecute Christ, for the church is his body (see 1Co 12:27; Eph 1:22–23). (CSB)

Cf 26:14. Saul's persecution of Jesus' disciples was persecution of the Son of God. Believers are the "Body of Christ." See p 1965. Luth: "When [the Word of God] strikes the heart, it is like a thunderbolt which overthrows even the most strongly fortified places by its force.... Paul hated the Gospel with such an obstinate heart that he was like an immovable rock. Yet he is shattered by the hammer of the Word. For 'God kills and brings to life; He brings down to Sheol and raises up' (1 Sam. 2:6)" (AE 3:348). (TLSB)

Several manuscripts have variant readings in vv 4–6 that appear to be copied from Acts 26:14, which refers to Saul kicking "against the goads." The word *phōnēn* can mean either "voice" or "sound." Here, because Paul hears words, it obviously means "voice." In v 7, however, it could be translated either way. NIV has "sound," perhaps because they could not "understand the voice," as Paul relates in Acts 22:9. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 2, Part 2)

9:5-6 *Lord?* Not an expression of faith but of respect. Up to this moment, Saul was convinced that his mission pleased God. *I am Jesus*. The Lord answers Saul's question concerning His identity by speaking and acting as God, directing Saul on where to go and saying no more. (TLSB)

9:5 *Who are you, Lord?* In rabbinic tradition such a voice from heaven would have been understood as the voice of God himself. The solemn repetition of Saul's name and the bright light suggested to him that he was in the presence of deity. (CSB)

9:6-7 Paul is told that he will learn in Damascus the details of what he must do. When Paul relates the event for the benefit of King Agrippa (Acts 26:16–18), He has the voice explain the mission at this point, probably for the sake of understanding. Though at v 7 the men see no one, Acts 22:9 does reveal that they saw the light. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 2, Part 2)

9:7-9 It can hardly be accidental that after Paul falls down (cf 1 Cor 14:25) through the force of this divine confrontation, Luke uses the common term for the resurrection from the dead (hjgevraqh) or for those miraculously raised from the sickbed. The verb is in the emphatic position. The apostle has the sickness unto death, and only the Lord can raise him. Note also that Saul's blindness and fast are three days. Saul is led to Damascus in a humiliating way, emphasizing his complete dependence on external help, and finally on God. (For a discussion of the "difficulties" presented by v 7 when compared to Acts 22:9, see F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, The International Commentary on the New Testament, reprint [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980] 197.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 14, Part 1)

9:7 *heard the sound*. Those with Saul "heard the sound" but "did not understand" what the voice was saying (22:9; cf. Da 10:7). (CSB)

9:8-9 *he saw nothing*. Physical afflictions can turn an individual toward repentance and contrition (e.g., Zechariah's muteness, Lk 1:20; Miriam's leprosy, Nu 12:10). Saul's murderous energy (v 1) contrasts with his meek dependence here. *neither ate nor drank*. The heavenly vision (26:19) may have driven Saul to fast as part of his repentance and contrition. Cf Ezr 9:5; Ne 1:4; Dn 9:3. (TLSB)

9:9 Saul's three days of blindness and fasting may be symbolic of our Lord's Triduum. "The three days might well bring home to Saul himself the reality of the baptismal significance of death, burial, and resurrection with Christ, which plays so prominent a part of his own theology" (*Peake's Commentary*, p 898). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 2, Part 2)

9:10-16 *From Persecutor to Chosen Instrument*: God chooses a Christian man by the name of Ananias to seek Paul out. He was a devout man by the standards of Jewish law and well thought of by his contemporaries (see Acts 22:12). His address is known: “Straight Street” traversed Damascus from East to West and had colonnaded halls on both sides and imposing gates at each end (Haenchen, 323, note 7). Note: the term “vision” (*horama*) occurs 11 times in the New Testament, not once outside of Acts! (7:31; 9:10, 12; 10:3, 17, 19; 11:5; 12:9; 16:9, 10; 18:9). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 8, Part 1)

Ananias’ assignment is to enter the house of a man called Judas where Saul was staying and to lay hands on Saul so that he might regain his sight. Saul, too, by way of a vision, was informed about this and would be expecting him. Ananias expresses hesitation because it was well-known (*ēkousa apo pollōn v 13*) that Saul was a formidable man, with authoritative backing from the Jewish council.

Note: Christians are designated as “saints” and “those who call upon” the name of Jesus. In Acts Christians are also called “those being saved” (2:47), “disciples” (6:1), “saints” (9:13), “brothers” (9:30), believers (10:45), “Nazarene sect” (24:5), and perhaps “friends” (27:3). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 8, Part 1)

9:10-12 Ananias likely was among a nascent Christian community that had sprung up in Damascus under influence from Galilee, just to the south (see Acts 22:12). He received a shocking instruction to lay hands on Saul, the destroyer of the church. God asks the impossible of his servants. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 14, Part 1)

9:10 *Ananias*. Mentioned elsewhere only in 22:12. His was a common name (5:1; 23:2). The Greek form is derived from the Hebrew name Hananiah, meaning “The LORD is gracious/shows grace” (see Da 1:6). (CSB)

disciple at Damascus. One of the people Saul would have brought “bound to Jerusalem” (v 2). *Ananias*. Common name. Cf 5:1. *vision*. Prophesied in 2:17 (cf 10:9–16; 11:5). (TLSB)

VISION - Luke uses the term *orama*, “vision,” clearly setting this mode of communication apart from the confrontation on the road to Damascus. A vision was a less direct revelation. The word is also used in v 12 of Paul’s seeing Ananias coming to him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 2, Part 2)

9:11-12 *street called Straight*. Major street in the city. Ananias’s help for Saul illustrates how the Lord brings otherwise disparate people into fellowship through the Gospel. *he is praying*. Expression of his repentance. (TLSB)

9:11 *Straight Street*. Probably followed the same route of the long, straight street that today runs through the city from east to west. It is a decided contrast to the numerous crooked streets of the city (see map of “Roman Damascus”). (CSB)

Tarsus. See note on 22:3. (CSB)

praying. Prayer is often associated with visions in Luke and Acts (see 10:9–11; Lk 1:10; 3:21; 9:28). (CSB)

9:13-14 Ananias offers a perfectly reasonable objection to the divine plan. However, he still addresses the Lord and thus awaits the Lord’s response to the objection. To “call” on the name of the Lord here means to be a Christian (see also Acts 9:21; Rom 10:12; cf Gen 4:26). The one to whom we pray defines us Christians. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 14, Part 1)

9:13 Saul's reputation and his authorization to hunt down believers had reached Damascus, c 135 mi from Jerusalem. (TLSB)

9:13, 32 *saints*. See notes on Ro 1:7; Php 1:1. (CSB)

9:15-16 These verses constitute a compact summary of Paul's entire life, purpose, and work henceforth: He is a "vessel" of God's choice (*skeuos eklogēs*—genitive of quality, BDF §165), selected for a task of which he was conscious from then on (Gal 1:15–17; Rom 1:1). In the metaphorical designation of Paul as *skeuos eklogēs* the instrumental character of *skeuos* predominates (s.v. *skeuos* *The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1981] 3:251.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 8, Part 1)

The Lord rejects Ananias's objection because his plans for Saul are bigger than any objection ever could be. Note the echo of the Gospel (Lk 21:12; also Ps 119:46). To be an apostle of the Lord requires acceptance of suffering. To bear Christ to the world is to share in his sufferings. In Luke the divine necessity of suffering is first of all Christ's (Lk 9:22; 17:25; 22:15; etc.), but it becomes the apostles' by extension (2 Cor 4:10–12; 6:4–10; 11:23–28). To endure for the name is to endure for Christ himself. To dishonor the name is to dishonor Christ himself. The call of Saul is a parallel to the Old Testament prophetic calls in that it does not depend on the merit of the one called; indeed it depends rather on the unworthiness of the one called and the graciousness of the one calling. Saul's call is different from the Old Testament in that he is himself an unbeliever and persecutor. He is the personal display of the radical grace of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 14, Part 1)

chosen instrument. The Lord often calls those considered least likely to serve His plan of salvation. Recall how the Lord directed Samuel in anointing David as Saul's successor (1Sm 16). *suffer for the sake of My name*. God's name is inseparable from His covenant of grace with humankind. (Cf Ac 4:12; Ezk 36:22; Rv 21:6.) Christ instructed His disciples regarding the cost of discipleship. The disciple is not above the teacher (Mt 10:24), and His disciples would be condemned by religious and civil authorities for His sake (Mt 10:17). (TLSB)

9:15 INSTRUMENT - *Skeuos*, "instrument," is a general term for vessel, utensil, container, or equipment; it can even refer to God's weapons (Jer 27:25 LXX, corresponding to Jer 50:25 in Hebrew and English; on the term, see *TDNT* 7.359–65). Here it provides a vivid picture of God's use of Paul. "The metaphor often occurs [in the LXX] in connection with the art of the potter. Man esp[ecially] is the material which takes shape in the hand of him who creates and fashions him." At 2 Cor 4:7, regarding the treasure in earthen vessels, "the reference is not to the body bearing the soul but to the whole man bearing the message [of God]." The rabbis taught that people are instruments either of God or of Satan. In Apocalypse of Moses 16, "The devil says to the serpent in Paradise: 'Be my tool.'" God then curses it, saying, "thou hast become a *skeuos axariston* [ungrateful vessel]." In Hos 8:8, God says Israel has become *cikāli ean-rayfets bon*, "like an undesirable vessel." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 2, Part 2)

The word *eklogē* is a noun meaning "choosing, election." It refers to people or items selected or chosen from among others, "especially of God's selection of Christians" (BAGD 243a). The genitive construction with the noun—a Hebraism—makes it functionally equivalent to an adjective, "chosen." The stress on God's choosing emphasizes that God's election and call to service is solely by grace. Saul may or may not be the best person for the task, but he is the one selected by God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 2, Part 2)

before the Gentiles. See Ro 1:13–14. (CSB)

their kings. Agrippa (26:1) and Caesar at Rome (25:11–12; 28:19). (CSB)

9:16 Luther: “All Christendom is a small group that must submit to, suffer, and bear more than all other people whatever grief the devil and the world can inflict on it. Now who, in view of what they appear to be and are subjected to, will recognize and learn that they are genuine Christians? Reason will surely not show this. The Holy Spirit must do so. He is called ‘the Spirit of truth’ because in spite of what they appear to be and are subjected to ... He strengthens and preserves hearts in the faith” (AE 24:358). (TLSB)

9:17-19a *Despised Enemy Becomes a Brother:* Luke’s narrative underlines the new situation in Christ: (1) Saul has now become a “brother” (v 17) instead of an enemy and persecutor (Phil 3:6) of the church; (2) Saul receives sight and the gift of the Holy Spirit upon Ananias’ touch; and (3) Saul refreshes himself with food. Note the imperfect *ērchou* and *en tēi hodōi* in v 17: “On the way to do in the followers of ‘the Way,’ Saul was turned around and set on the way” (William H. Willimon, *Acts* [Atlanta: John Knox, 1988] 77). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 8, Part 1)

Ananias addresses Saul as “brother.” Those who by adoption are brothers of the only begotten Son can only address one another as brother. It was the Lord’s will that Saul, yes, Saul, be saved. God’s heart was brimming with compassion for this chief of sinners, as for all sinners, even sinners like us (1 Tim 1:15). The Lord himself sent Ananias. The Lord intended that Saul see and receive the Holy Spirit, and to that end he was baptized. “We cannot assume that he (Luke) intended his readers to infer that the Spirit’s filling preceded baptism” (James Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Epworth Commentaries, I. H. Jones, gen. ed. [London: Epworth Press, 1996] 124). For a more complete description of this meeting between Saul and Ananias, see Acts 22:12–14. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 14, Part 1)

9:17 *Jesus, who appeared to you.* The Damascus road experience was not merely a vision. The resurrected Christ actually appeared to Saul, and on this fact Saul based his qualification to be an apostle (1Co 9:1; 15:8). (CSB)

Ananias shows remarkable faith when he addresses Saul as “brother.” But he is still restrained; though he knows the vision showed him laying hands on him and restoring his sight, he simply announces that the Lord “has sent me so that you may see again,” and adds the result of Baptism, “and be filled with the Holy Spirit” At Acts 22:13 Paul recalls him saying, “Receive your sight!” and includes a brief sermonette with the invitation to be baptized. That passage is a part of Paul’s defense, which is stronger with a clear miracle via Ananias. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 2, Part 2)

9:18 *scales.* Similar description appears in Tobit 3:17. There is also a spiritual healing, allowing true insight of God in Christ. *baptized.* Baptism clothes the believer with Christ, removes former barriers, and bestows the Spirit. Cf 2:38–39; Mt 28:19–20; Jn 3:5–6; Rm 6:1–4; 1Co 6:11; Gal 3:27–28; Eph 4:1. (TLSB)

9:1–19a Jesus confronts Saul and converts him through the Gospel and Baptism. Though Saul was convinced of his righteous mission of persecution, he learned that true righteousness comes only through Christ. All we are and all we do depends on His blessing and calling. • “Praise for the light from heaven And for the voice of awe; Praise for the glorious vision The persecutor saw. O Lord, for Paul’s conversion, We bless Your name today; Come shine within our darkness, And guide us on our way.” Amen. (LSB 517:12) (TLSB)

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. ²⁰ At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. ²¹ All those who heard him were astonished and asked, “Isn’t he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn’t he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?” ²² Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.

9:19b-22 The suddenness (*eutheōs*) of Saul’s unprecedented about-face from persecutor to missionary causes amazement and incredulity. When visiting the synagogues, he seeks not to ravage (*portheō*—cf. Gal 1:13, 23!) but to preach Jesus (note the imperfect *ekērussen* denoting continuous activity). Luke uses *elēluthēi* (pluperfect, see BDF §347 [3]) to indicate that Saul’s initial purpose is a thing of the past. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 8, Part 1)

The content of Saul’s proclamation is that Jesus is the Son of God, a term used only here of Jesus in Acts. Note that Psalm 2:7 is cited in Paul’s sermon in 13:33. Applied to Jesus, the term presents him as the true representative of the Israel of God (2 Sam 7:14; Ex 4:22; Dt 32: 6; Jer 31:19; Hos 11:1). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 8, Part 1)

The text concludes on a confident, forward-looking note. Paul became strong, confounding the Jews with his ability to prove from the Old Testament that Jesus is the Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 8, Part 1)

There is no reason Saul could not have gone into Arabia (Nabataean Arabia was just to the north of Damascus) at this time (Gal 1:17). In his first proclamation, *ekhrussen*, Saul preached that Jesus was the Son of God and the Messiah, each being entailed in the confession of the other. Paul’s preaching was made the more shocking because of the content of the rhetorical questions, which emphatically require an affirmative answer (v 21). As a zealous student of the Old Testament, Saul would have been well-equipped to argue from its pages showing that Jesus is the Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 14, Part 1)

9:19b Cf vv 20–22. Christ’s disciples received Saul into fellowship due to sincere faith. (TLSB)

9:20 *At once*. Following his baptism. (CSB)

The Holy Spirit breathed new life into him who formerly breathed threats and murders. (TLSB)

synagogues. It became Saul’s regular practice to preach at every opportunity in the synagogues (13:5; 14:1; 17:1–2, 10; 18:4, 19; 19:8). (CSB)

Jesus is the Son of God. Saul’s message was a declaration of what he himself had become convinced of on the Damascus road: Christ’s deity and Messiahship (see NIV text note on v. 22). (CSB)

“The Son of God” is part of the Davidic strain from 2 Sam 7:13–14, “He will be my Son.” “Jesus is the embodiment of all that Israel was designed to be” (Fred Danker, *Creeds in the Bible*, p 37). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 2, Part 2)

9:21 WERE ASTONISHED – The disciples are not prepared to obey the Lord because they are afraid of their persecutor. This shows a misdirected fear of the persecutor rather than God (cf. Luke 12:4-5). It also shows the problem that humans have in keeping up with the Lord’s work. The Lord’s work is revealed through events that over-throw human expectations. Humans calculate the future on the basis of

their normal experience. These calculations leave them unprepared for the appearance of the Overruler, who negates human plans and works the unexpected. This is a problem not only for the rejecters of Jesus but also for the church, which, as our narrative indicates, is led by the Lord into situations beyond its fathoming. (Tannehill)

WHO CALL ON HIS NAME – To call on the Lord is to believe in Him and to pray. Cf 2:21; Rm 10:9, 14; 2Tm 2:22; 1Pt 1:17. (TLSB)

9”22 BAFLED THE JEWS – Marking Saul’s separation from his former beliefs and from that community. (TLSB)

PROVING THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST – OT prophecies were fulfilled in Christ. (TLSB)

9:19b–22 The Holy Spirit opened Saul’s eyes and heart to forgiveness through Christ so he boldly confessed His name to his fellow Jews. Today, trust that the Lord is able to change people’s lives—even people you regard as utterly lost and despicable. How great is our Lord and His grace! • Father, as Your Holy Spirit opened Saul’s heart to the Gospel, open my heart, that I might believe and make a fearless testimony of Christ. Amen. (TLSB)

SECOND READING – Revelation 5:1-14

Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. ² **And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?”** ³ **But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it.** ⁴ **I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside.** ⁵ **Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.”** ⁶ **Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits^a of God sent out into all the earth.** ⁷ **He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.** ⁸ **And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.** ⁹ **And they sang a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.** ¹⁰ **You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”** ¹¹ **Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.** ¹² **In a loud voice they sang: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”** ¹³ **Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!”** ¹⁴ **The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.**

5:1-7 Jesus Christ is introduced in the vision of God’s heavenly glory as the victorious Lamb. He is presented to the heavenly host as the one who can receive the scroll from God and look into it. His receiving the scroll from God is also a demonstration and a vindication that his death and resurrection were a victory for God and his people (5:9) (CC p. 134)

5:1 IN THE RIGHT HAND – The scroll with its seven seals in the right hand of God contains a prophetic message that for the moment is closed to everyone. Yet, because Revelation begins with the idea that a revelation was about to be given concerning events that must soon happen (1:1–3), it is possible that the

contents of the scroll focused on the future—a future which was unknown, but which also was important and necessary for God’s people on earth to know. But for the moment as John gazed at the sealed scroll, its message was hidden. And it would remain closed and its contents unknown until the worthy person came to claim it. (CC pp. 134-135)

His right hand is the hand of His divine power and majesty. (Poellot)

“Within the authority and control, consistent with the character of the One sitting in the place of authority. (Eschelbach)

scroll. See note on 1:11; cf. the little scroll of 10:2, 8–10. (CSB)

Symbolizes God’s plan of salvation. (TLSB)

βιβλίον—This originally meant a “strip of βύβλος,” that is, a “strip of papyrus taken from a papyrus shrub or plant,” and it was commonly used to designate a “sheet of papyrus paper.” In the Greek world, writing paper made of papyrus replaced the wooden tablet as early as the sixth century B.C. Papyrus sheets sewn together, forming a roll, comprised the book of the ancient world. βιβλίον thus became the common word for a “roll of a book, a scroll.” The LXX used it to translate the Hebrew רִגְלֵי כְתוּבִים, “roll of writing” (Jer 36:2 [LXX 43:2]) or for רִגְלֵי alone (Ex 17:14). When the codex (our modern book) came into use in the latter part of the first or in the early second century A.D., βιβλίον was also used for it. From that time on the context in which βιβλίον appeared determined whether it meant “codex” or “scroll.” (CC p. 131)

How is the word used here in Rev 5:1? The fact that ἀνοίξει (the aorist infinitive of ἀνοίγω, “to open”) is used in reference to this βιβλίον (5:2–4) could indicate that here it refers to a codex. In classical Greek the common verb for “to open, unroll” a scroll was ἀναπτύσσω. This word appears only once in the NT as a possible reading in Lk 4:17. In Lk 4:16–20 the βιβλίον of Isaiah that was given to Jesus to read was a scroll, for *all sacred texts that were used for public reading in the synagogues were written on scrolls, even after the codex came into common usage*. During the time when the writings of the NT were being composed, ἀνοίγω began to replace ἀναπτύσσω even when used for the unrolling of a scroll. (The variant reading of ἀνοίγω for ἀναπτύσσω in Lk 4:17 indicates such a change.) By the time Revelation was written, ἀνοίγω was commonly used to refer to the opening of both scrolls and codices. Another point that could suggest that the βιβλίον here in Rev 5:1 was a codex is that it was written both within and on the outside. Most scrolls, such as the Dead Sea scrolls, were written on one side only: the front or inside, the side that was hidden and protected when the scroll was rolled up. However, scrolls on rare occasions were written on both sides. The fact that the βιβλίον here in John’s vision was *a sacred writing*, could suggest that it was a scroll, especially if this whole vision is understood *within a Jewish Christian milieu*. Taking everything into consideration, it seems most likely that the βιβλίον here in 5:1 was a scroll, a sacred scroll, and not a codex. (CC p. 131)

We have reason to say that the scroll contained a full statement of “things which must be hereafter,” for we see the unfolding of events with the opening of each of the seven seals. Such a scroll, then, in the hand of the Almighty, is a symbol of God’s omniscience. (Poellot p. 82)

writing on both sides. Like the stone tablets of the OT covenant law (Ex 32:15; see Eze 2:9–10). The fibers of a papyrus scroll run horizontally on the inside, which makes writing easier than on the reverse side (where the fibers are vertical). (CSB)

Implies that God’s plan is comprehensive and complete. (TLSB)

sealed with seven seals.† Indicating absolute inviolability (cf. Isa 29:11; Da 12:4). Scrolls are sealed because they refer to the future, which is a closed book to men until revealed by God. (CSB)

The scroll in John’s vision is sealed with *seven seals*. Seals offer security and keep the contents safe from any unlawful usage. In Isa 29:11 a scroll with words describing a vision is sealed to secure it against any unauthorized reading. In Mt 27:66 the tomb of Jesus was sealed in order to secure it. The Gospel of Peter (33), dated around A.D. 125–150 or earlier, says that the tomb of Jesus was sealed with *seven seals*. It was a practice in Roman civil law for a last will and testament to be sealed with seven seals. (CC p. 134)

5:2-5a A mighty angel sends out the call for such a worthy figure to come forward and lay lawful claim to the receiving and the opening of the scroll. He cries out with a loud voice, asking if anyone anywhere was worthy to lay claim to the scroll. There was no such figure in all of God’s creation, not even among the angels. No one was worthy, for no one had earned the right to stand before the presence of God and lay legal claim to the scroll. John sensed the great need that someone be found to receive the scroll, for he began to weep. Possibly he inferred that the future destiny of God’s people was at stake—and as events unfold in Revelation that will be proven to be the case. *Someone* had to claim the scroll for the sake of the destiny of God’s people. But who? While the mighty angel introduces the whole action of seeking the worthy one to come forward, it is left up to one of the elders to bring the answer to John’s sadness and dismay. (CC pp. 135-136)

Throughout Revelation angels help John as he receives and views the prophetic visions. They assist the prophet in interpreting scenes or lead him through a vision by pointing out details, focusing his attention on them (e.g. 17:1–3, 6–7). But in two instances an elder attends John (5:5; 7:13–14). The suggestion that the elder’s “intervention has no symbolical meaning” misses an important point in the entire mediation of the prophetic message in Revelation from Jesus Christ through angels (1:1). *In the two visions that have most to do with the redemption and salvation of God’s people and with the resulting triumphal reign of Christ, an elder attends John, not an angel.* Who better than an elevated saint, who himself has gone through the suffering but now is at peace before God’s holy presence, to tell John to stop weeping by urging him to look at the Lamb of God? The elder has the honor of pointing John, in the midst of his tears, to the victorious Lamb of God. The imagery is reminiscent of the honor of proclaiming the Gospel that God gives to his church, his people on earth—an honor that not even the angels have in this same measure (see 1 Pet 1:12), though they had the honor of being the first heralds of Christ’s birth (Lk 2:8–14) and resurrection (Mt 28:2–6). (CC pp. 135-136)

5:2 *mighty angel.* See 18:21. (CSB)

Though John does not explicitly say so, it is likely that this angel is of a different rank from the living creatures described in 4:6-7. Different angels fulfill a variety of functions in Revelation (cf. 1:20; 4:6-7; 7:1; 9:15; 20:1). (TLSB)

WHO IS WORTHY – Greek *axios*, “deserving, fit.” (TLSB)

5:3 *heaven ... earth ... under the earth.* A conventional phrase used to express the universality of the proclamation—no creature was worthy. It is not intended to teach a threefold division of the universe (cf. Ex 20:4; Php 2:10). (CSB)

This reference includes the angels that are there. (Poellot p. 83)

5:4 I WEPT – *klaio* – To sob, wail aloud. – I began to weep and continued to do so for some time. (QV)

NO ONE WAS FOUND THAT WAS WORTHY – Emphasizes Christ’s uniqueness, since He alone is worthy (v. 5). Because of His sacrificial death and glorious resurrection, He alone is fit to reveal and bring to fulfillment God’s great plan of redemption and renewal. (TLSB)

5:5 *Lion of the tribe of Judah.* A Messianic title taken from Ge 49:8–10, where Judah is named a “lion’s cub” and promised the right to rule “until he comes to whom it belongs” (see also Eze 21:27). (CSB)

Messianic titles (cf. Gen. 49:8-12). (TLSB)

The elder introduces John to the victorious Lamb by the titles that describe Jesus by way of his human nature. “The Lion who is from the tribe of Judah” and “the Root of David” (5:5) refer to Christ’s human origin and descent. From the tribe of Judah the Messiah would come (Jer. 31:31; Micah 5:2 {MT 5:1}; Mt. 1:2; Heb. 7:14; 8:8), and the lion was the symbol of his messianic royal reign and power (Gen 49:8–10). He would be a direct descendant of David (2Sam. 7; Is. 11:1-10; Mt. 1:6; 9:27; 21:9; Mk. 12:35-37; Rom. 15:12), and as such would be the everlasting King upon whom all the nations would place their hope for salvation (Is 42:4; 49:1, 6). (CC pp. 136-137)

In Jewish apocalyptic thought, the Messiah is represented by and symbolized as a lion. For example, in 4 Ezra 11:36–46 the Messiah as a roaring lion will judge the ungodly in the last days but in mercy will deliver God’s people. (CC pp. 136-137)

Likewise in Jewish literature, a descendant of David would judge and save all people who would call on the Lord. For example in the Testament of Judah (24:1–6) this deliverer is called the “Shoot of God Most High,” and this Shoot would come from the root. This Shoot is also called the “Star from Jacob” and the “Sun of righteousness” (cf. Num 24:17; Mal 4:1–3; see also the Testament of Levi 18:1–5). In Psalms of Solomon (17:21–26), the son of David will rule over Israel and in wisdom and righteousness will judge the sinners, but he will gather God’s people and will lead them in righteousness. (CC pp. 136-137)

Root of David. See Isa 11:1, 10, which looks forward to the ideal king in the line of David. The title is interpreted Messianically in Ro 15:12. (CSB)

Thus these two titles from the OT, “the Lion who is from the tribe of Judah” and “Root of David” (Rev 5:5), influenced both Judaism and early Christianity in their respective messianic thoughts and hopes. The Jewish Christian apostles, however, had the advantage over Judaism, for they recognized Jesus of Nazareth as this Lion of Judah and Root of David. Before the birth of Jesus, Jewish people could only recognize the Christ prophetically; after the coming of Jesus of Nazareth many of them failed to see him as such. But Paul and John and others did. Paul recognized Jesus Christ as the seed of David because of his resurrection (2 Tim 2:8; see also Rom 1:2–4). Peter in his sermon at Pentecost also recognized that Jesus was the seed of David because of his resurrection (Acts 2:29–32). And now John, in the vision of Christ’s enthronement, is introduced to the victorious Lamb by way of these two great messianic titles from the OT. (CC pp. 136-137)

Both expressions are OT references to the Messiah. The elder, as an agent of the Word, properly reaches back into the revealed Word in pointing to the Messiah, the incarnate Word. He also makes it clear that these OT prophecies had actually been fulfilled. (Poellot p. 84)

HAS TRIUMPHED – kikao – To subdue, conquer, overcome, prevail or get the victory. (QV)

This is a favorite of John. Of the 33 times that it is used in the NT, 25 are in John's writings. (CC p. 132)

5:6 Lamb. † Pictured as the sacrifice for sin ("slain"; cf. Isa 53:7; Jn 1:29, 36) and as the mighty conqueror (17:14). Revelation uses a special word for "lamb" (29 times in Revelation and only once elsewhere in the NT—Jn 21:15). In the OT lambs were sacrificial animals, by which atonement was made for the sins of the people (cf. 1Pe 1:9). "Lamb" and "Lion" (v. 5) reflect two OT traditions of the Messiah (Isa 53:7; Da 7:13–14), seemingly so contradictory that some Jews taught that there would be two Messiahs. (CSB)

This messianic Lion of Judah and Root of David has conquered, and because of his victory he has earned the right to take the scroll and open it (5:5). *He is Jesus, the Lamb who was slain (5:6). The victory is won by Christ the Lamb, in his death on the cross and his resurrection. It is a victory that is shared with his faithful followers, the people of God* (e.g., 12:11). It is a victory which determines the Christian's life on earth (2:26). And it is the victory that guarantees life forever with God (21:7). Here in the vision of Christ's enthronement John's eyes are completely focused on the victorious Lamb, who is about to be received by God and about to have conferred on him the royal authority to receive the scroll. (CC p. 137)

A lambkin. – A physically full-grown lamb, still young. (CC p. 132)

as if it had been slain. Bearing the marks of its slaughter—he has come to power through his death. (CSB)

Recalls not only that Jesus is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) but also His resurrection. (TLSB)

By his wounds and scars he is forever known. (Stoekhardt p. 22)

Isaiah 53:5b ...and by his wounds we are healed."

Galatians 6:17 "Finally, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus."

STANDING IN THE CENTER OF THE THRONE – Jesus previously said that He shares a throne with His Father. Here, however, He is described as standing before God's throne. Accordingly, many interpreters understand this scene as involving a coronation or investiture of authority. One may see here a glimpse of what occurred in heaven at Christ's ascension. (TLSB)

The Lamb stands "in the midst of the throne and of the four winged creatures and in the midst of the elders" (5:6). As in 4:6, where the same expression is used, "in the midst" (ἐν μέσῳ) refers to the closeness of the Lamb to God and the heavenly host. Here it probably takes on more significance than merely being close or "in the immediate vicinity." The victorious Lamb, the exalted Christ, is now near to God and the heavenly host as the center of attention and as the recipient of honor and worship (see 5:9–12). For the exalted Christ, because of his victory as the Lamb, will now rule the heavenly host, next to God the Father and by God's authority. In particular it is from the midst (ἀνὰ μέσον) of the throne that the Lamb will care for (ποιμανεῖ) the saints in heaven and lead them to the fountains of living waters (7:17). (CC p. 137)

As the Lamb stands "in the midst" (5:6), he does so as one who has been slain—a witness to his death on the cross. But it is also a witness to his resurrection, for though once slain, he now *stands* and lives forever (Rev 1:18; Heb 9:23–28). (CC p. 137)

seven horns. The horn is an ancient Jewish symbol for power or strength (cf. Dt 33:17). The fourth beast of Da 7:7, 20 had ten horns (cf. Da 8:3, 5). Seven horns would symbolize full strength. (CSB)

As the victorious Lamb lives, he exercises total power on earth (cf. Mt 28:19), as symbolized by the “seven horns,” and by means of the “seven Spirits” he is omniscient, all seeing and all knowing (Rev 5:6). In the OT the “horn” is a symbol or metaphor of power on earth in human affairs. For example, in Deut 33:13–17, in reference to Joseph, the horn symbolizes his majesty and power by which he subdues the nations—most likely a reminder of his role in Egypt but now used as a metaphor for the role that his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, play (cf. 1 Ki 22:11; Ps 112:9; Zech 1:18–19). Memorable are the ten horns of the fourth beast in the vision in Dan 7:7. The number ten there suggests supreme power exercised by human beings *in human affairs*, while seven, the number of the Lamb’s horns here, points to his exercise of supreme power *over all life, human and spiritual*. The number seven suggests also that the exalted Lamb exercises this supreme authority and power through the “seven Spirits of God” (Rev 3:1; 4:5; 5:6; cf. 1:4), the Holy Spirit, for God the Father now gives his Spirit to act on behalf of the victorious Christ (cf. Zech 4:1–6). The exalted Lord Christ now exercises this supreme authority and power on behalf of God’s people, in particular as he uses this power to defend them on earth, as will be revealed in the prophetic message of chapters 6–16. The “seven horns” (5:6) are a comforting reminder to John that the Lord Christ will defend him and his faithful hearers no matter what they experience and suffer, for he is the “horn of [their] salvation” (Ps 18:2–3 [MT 18:3–4]; cf. 1 Sam 2:1; Lk 1:69). (CC pp. 137-138)

He appears here in the fullness of divine power and might. He reigns and rules over all things with his Father. (Stoekhardt p. 22)

SEVEN EYES – Closely connected with the horns are the “seven eyes” (Rev 5:6), by which the exalted Lamb now knows and sees all things. In Zech 4:10 the seven eyes of Yahweh rove over the whole earth, that is, the Lord (by means of the seven eyes) sees and knows everything. In Zechariah’s vision the seven eyes are symbolized by the lampstand with its seven lamps (4:1–3), and together they represent and symbolize Yahweh’s presence by his Spirit (4:4–6). *But now this authority to oversee everything by the Holy Spirit has been given by God to the Lamb because of his victory.* On behalf of God the Father he now exercises this oversight. John would again be reminded that the Lamb does so on behalf of God’s people for their comfort and faith. This is entailed in Jesus being the “light” of the world (see Jn 1:4; 8:12; 12:35–36, 46). The seven horns and eyes thus demonstrate the close relationship between the triumphant Christ and the Holy Spirit, for in Christ’s exalted status he and the Spirit are inseparable, especially as Christ works with his church on earth through his Word and with the Spirit (Rev 2:1, 7, 11, etc.; cf. Jn 14:17; 20:22; Rev 4:5). (CC p. 138)

seven spirits. † See NIV text note and notes on 1:4; 4:5. (CSB)

5:7 TOOK THE SCROLL – Investing Him as the glorified Son of Man (TLSB)

Jesus Christ as the Lamb comes to God on his throne and takes from him the seven-sealed scroll. This presentation before God recalls the presentation of the Son of Man before the Ancient of Days in Dan 7:13–14. The Son of Man approached the Ancient of Days and was presented to him. He then was given authority and glory and power over all peoples and nations, and his dominion would be an everlasting reign. Here in Revelation John sees the Lamb approach the heavenly throne and receive from God the seven-sealed scroll. What are the contents of the scroll, and what does the action of receiving and opening the scroll signify? (CC pp. 137-138)

John wept when no one was found worthy to open the scroll, because he sensed that the scroll was about the destiny of God’s people. It becomes evident, as the Lamb opens each seal, that *the content of the scroll is the message that is prophetically made known to John*. That is, the contents of the scroll is the

message of Revelation (6:1–22:5). The message of the scroll has to do with events on earth from the time of Christ’s victory and ascension to the end of all earthly things. The prophetic message of Revelation is about the tribulation and suffering that the human race, including the church, will experience, from the ascension of Christ up to the end of this world. *But the most important part of the message concerns Christ’s present and future reign in glory and the current faith and mission of the church in the midst of all the agony and death throes of the human race and its history.* As each seal of the scroll is opened in turn, the panorama of earthly events, together with Christ’s reign with his people, will be poignantly displayed, beginning with 6:1 and continuing through 22:5. The first six seals control 6:1–7:17, and the seventh seal controls 8:1–22:5. *The ultimate purpose of Christ receiving the scroll and then revealing its contents to John and the church is to strengthen the church’s faith and to encourage the church, in the midst of all the sufferings, to remain faithful to Christ and so to attain the promise of everlasting glory. That faithfulness involves carrying out the mission Christ has given to her.* The receiving and opening of the scroll *does* involve the destiny of the church, God’s people—her suffering, mission, faith, hope, and ultimate glory with the reigning Christ. The destiny of God’s people is also to witness triumphantly, certain of the final outcome at Christ’s return (e.g., 14:1–15:4). Thus the destiny of the whole human race and all history is involved as well, for that destiny is and will be determined by the reception or rejection of the church’s witness to the Lord Christ. *The entire destiny of the church, of the human race, and of all history is thus revealed as the scroll is opened—not as a blueprint or a time schedule of human history, but rather as a visionary, prophetic picture of the times from the ascension of Christ to the eschaton.* And it is all under the lordship of Jesus Christ, for the glory of God and for the benefit of his people. (CC pp. 137-138)

Thus the action of the Lamb receiving the scroll from God is of great importance and is laden with meaning for John and the church. Someone had to be in charge of opening the scroll if the human race’s destiny was not only to be revealed but also controlled and was to have any hope for the future. The point is emphatically made to John in 5:3 that *no one anywhere* could receive the scroll and dominate its contents. No evil force, no creature, angelic or otherwise, no human, and certainly not human history and ambitions, could claim authority to receive the scroll. Only the chosen one of God, the Lamb, could do so. This means first of all that the entire destiny of the human race and its history is under the lordship and control of Jesus Christ. Humanity is *not* under the guidance of some mindless evolutionary force and is not subject to the ambitions and works of people, but rather it is under the will and power of God as now exercised by Jesus Christ. The governance of humanity and humanity’s history and ultimate conclusion are under the control of God—his judgment and his love. (CC pp. 137-138)

In receiving the scroll the Lord Christ received from God the authority (1) to reveal to John and the church the prophetic message of the scroll; (2) as Lord to control and dominate everything in it; and (3) to judge humanity and the events revealed. He earned and merited the right to be the Lord and judge of all human events and history by the shedding of his blood and by his victorious resurrection. As the Savior of the world, who died for all, Christ alone determines and will continue to determine the outcome of human history. He also is the one who dominates all evil, and he will control it for the benefit of the church and her mission. Finally at the End, he will judge the evil and deliver his suffering bride. *The Lord Christ thus rules everything on behalf of his heavenly Father and for the benefit of his church, so that she will be protected in faith and hope and will be enabled to carry out her mission unto the End.* (CC pp. 137-138)

Jesus Christ as the Lamb comes to God on his throne and takes from him the seven-sealed scroll. This presentation before God recalls the presentation of the Son of Man before the Ancient of Days in Dan 7:13–14. The Son of Man approached the Ancient of Days and was presented to him. He then was given authority and glory and power over all peoples and nations, and his dominion would be an everlasting reign. Here in Revelation John sees the Lamb approach the heavenly throne and receive from God the seven-sealed scroll. What are the contents of the scroll, and what does the action of receiving and opening the scroll signify? (CC pp. 137-138)

Finally, the event of the Lamb receiving the scroll is the *coronation* of Jesus Christ as the King of kings and Lord of lords (cf. 19:16). It is his exaltation to the right hand of God in order now to rule everything on behalf of his heavenly Father. It is the enthronement of God's holy Son, who not long before hung on a cross. It is the beginning of the everlasting reign of God's righteousness through his exalted Son, a reign that will be consummated at the resurrection and in the new heaven and earth (20:11–21:7).

5:8-14 When the Lamb had thus taken the scroll and had been enthroned at the right of God (cf. 7:9; 22:1–3), the heavenly host (as represented by the four winged creatures and the twenty-four elders) fell before the Lamb. The elders made preparation to worship him with harps and golden censer-like bowls full of incense. The censers of incense symbolize the prayers of the saints as they rise to the throne of God. In Ps 141:2 (LXX 140:2), the psalmist asks God to receive his prayer as incense. In Lk 1:8–10 Zechariah in the temple offers up incense as the people outside are praying. The practice of offering up incense thus goes back to the OT (see also Ex 30:1–8). Here in Rev 5:8 the elders offer to God the prayers of the saints as they prepare to sing their hymn attended by the harps. Whether the four winged creatures also have harps and censers of incense is not clear, but most likely they join in the praise of the Lamb. In Jewish tradition angels were looked upon as intermediaries who offered up the prayers of God's people before his heavenly throne (see Tobit 12:11–15; 3 Baruch 11:3–9). Possibly the four winged creatures also have harps and censers of the prayers, for an angel does offer before God's throne the incense and prayers of the saints (Rev 8:3). However this might be, the prayers of God's people are a fragrant part of the worship as the heavenly host begin their hymn of praise to the Lamb. (CC pp. 140-141)

5:8 *fell down.*† The same type of devotion by the same ones is offered to Jesus as to God (4:10). Cf. Jn 5:23. (CSB)

By its reaction, the heavenly court affirms that the glorified Lord Jesus is worthy to be installed into His new capacity. (TLSB)

harp. An ancient stringed instrument (not the large modern harp) used especially to accompany songs (Ps 33:2). (CSB)

bowls full of incense. The bowl was a flat, shallow cup. Incense was a normal feature of Hebrew ritual (see Dt 33:10; cf. Ps 141:2; Rev 8:3–4). (CSB)

The centers of incense symbolize the prayers of the saints as they rise to the throne of God. In Ps. 141:2, the psalmist asks God to receive his prayer as incense. In Lk 1:8-10 Zechariah in the temple offers up incense as the people outside are praying. The practice of offering up incense thus goes back to the OT (Ex. 30:1-8). (CC p. 141)

prayers of the saints. In later Jewish thought, angels often present the prayers of saints to God (Tobit 12:15; 3 Baruch 11). (CSB)

5:9 *new song.*† Cf. 14:3; Ps 33:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; Isa 42:10. In the OT a new song celebrated a new act of divine deliverance or blessing, always referring to the salvation God is preparing for his people. That is also its sense here; notice the theme of the song. (CSB)

Christians throughout the ages have joined in the celestial singing described here. In our generation, numerous Lutheran hymnals have a musical setting that includes the very words of this canticle (e.g., “This is the Feast,” LSB 155). (TLSB)

With the singing of the hymn of praise to the Lamb “we enter into one of the greatest scenes of universal adoration anywhere recorded.” In fact, we can even say that *this scene of adoration of the Lamb is the greatest such scene in all of the biblical writings, for it is through the worship of the Lord Christ that the heavenly Father receives his highest glory from his saints* (cf. Jn 5:23; 8:54). (CC pp. 141-142)

The hymn or ode of praise is called a “*new song*” (Rev 5:9). In 14:3 the church militant, as represented by the 144,000, sing something akin to the “new song” as they follow the Lamb, indicating that the worship and praise of God’s people on earth is parallel to that of the saints in heaven before God and reaches toward it. In 15:3 the church on earth, as she is in deadly conflict with the beast, sings “the song of Moses ... and the hymn of the Lamb.” In contrast to the “new song,” the song of Moses and the Lamb is a hymn of victorious hope in the midst of conflict; it voices the assurance of victory here on earth despite the suffering caused by the beast. The new song, on the other hand, voices the peace of the ultimate victory in God’s presence in heaven. The song of Moses and the Lamb also expresses the rightness of God’s actions in showing his anger and judgment on earth toward the beast and his evil forces. (CC pp. 141-142)

Here in 5:9 the hymn of adoration addressed to the Lamb is “new” because it has never been sung before. Unlike the song of Moses and the Lamb, it contains no direct OT quotes. The stanzas of the new song (5:9–10, 12–13) echo the stanza in 4:11 and thus join the new song to the great Te Deum begun in 4:8 and continued in 4:11. Added in 5:9–10 and 5:12 are stanzas that celebrate the victory and enthronement of the Lamb. While such a hymn might have been sung before, it would have only been in anticipation. Now it is sung because the promise has been fulfilled, for the Christ has come and has won the victory for God and his people. The hymn itself expresses why the Lamb is worthy to receive “[all] the power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing” (5:12): he ransomed for God with his blood a people from all quarters of the human race (5:9). (CC pp. 141-142)

adousin – They began to sing and continued to do so without ceasing. (CC p. 133)

with your blood you purchased men. The sacrificial death of Christ is central to NT teaching (see Mk 10:45; 1Co 6:20). (CSB)

5:10 *kingdom and priests.* See note on 1:6. (CSB)

These people purchased by Christ are now the “kingdom” of God and serve as his “priests” on earth (5:10). The royal priesthood of all believers is a royal-priestly reign of God’s kingdom here on earth in which his people are involved. The fact that his people fulfill their royal reign as priests suggests that the purpose of God’s kingdom on earth is an intercessory one. That is, through the proclamation of the redemptive victory of the Lamb, God’s royal priests on earth hold up before his heavenly throne the atonement or blood covering (ἱλαστήριον, Rom 3:25; Heb 9:5; ἱλασμός, 1Jn 2:2; 4:10), as they point people through it to the mercy of God (see 1 Pet 2:5–9). Already Rev 1:6, part of the trinitarian imprimatur, makes this important identification of God’s people as “a kingdom, priests.” Rev 20:6 again mentions this royal priesthood as a description of the role of the church in the millennial reign of Christ on earth. The fact that this note of God’s people as his royal priests (5:10) is a part of the hymn which glorifies the Lamb demonstrates that they have this role because of Christ and that God honors his people as such. *For the royal priesthood of God’s saints is an image, a living picture of the royal priesthood of Christ, a priesthood for the salvation of all people by his own blood and through the proclamation of the Gospel* (cf. Heb 4:14–5:10; 9:11–28; 10:19–25). And this priestly reign of God’s people on earth is not some future happening, but it is active *now* through the proclamation of God’s Word (see Rev 10:11). *The royal priestly reign of Christ, the kingdom of God, is not some future event but is present now, though its present and future glory and its manifestation to the human race are not yet visible, for the reign of Christ is seen now only through faith.* (CC p. 142)

reign on the earth.† See 2:26–27; 20:4, 6; 22:5. (Cf. note on 3:21.) Not a reference to any millennial reign, for the reign of God’s people on the new earth will last forever, not for only a thousand years. “His kingdom will never end” (Lk 1:33). (CSB)

Luther: “All Christians are priests in equal degree” (AE 40:21). (TLSB)

5:11 *thousands upon thousands*. A rhetorical phrase for an indefinitely large number (see Da 7:10; cf. Heb 12:22). (CSB)

ESV has “myriads.” A myriad is ten thousand. Thus, the angels number in the millions. (TLSB)

Though the hymn of praise is begun by the four winged creatures and by the twenty-four elders, all the heavenly host of angels joins in this acclamation of the Lamb (5:11–12). The whole heavenly host, saints in representative fashion and all the angels, worships and adores the Lamb now enthroned at the right of the Father. All the glory and honor and worship that was given to God the Creator (4:11) is now given in equal manner to the victorious and elevated Christ (5:12). (CC pp. 142-143)

When all these saints shall once be gathered in heaven, they shall together constitute a great people, and they will then with united voices praise the Lamb and give him glory and honor. He has brought all things to a glorious conclusion conducting them safely through all tribulation and making them his holy people in heaven. (Stoeckhardt p. 23)

Common Preface – It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to you, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who on this day overcame death and the grave and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify your glorious name, evermore praising you and saying: Sanctus – Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of Sabaoth. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he, blessed is he, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.

5:12 WORTHY IS THE LAMB – Christ deserves the wealth of all honor, embodied here in seven aspects symbolizing fullness. Because John records the very words of the angelic worship, the earthly Church is able to join in “with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven” (LSB Altar Book, p. 161). (TLSB)

When comparing the two stanzas of praise, the first to God the Creator (4:11) and the second to the Lamb (5:12), one finds that the same ascriptive words of praise are used in both: “glory” (δόξα), “honor” (τιμή), and “power” (δύναμις). But to the Christ further words of praise are ascribed: “wealth” (πλοῦτος), “wisdom” (σοφία), “strength” (ἰσχύς), and “blessing” (εὐλογία). These additional words of worship and praise are given to the Son of God because he merited and earned them in his earthly life of humiliation, suffering and death, and by his glorious resurrection. Because he is the Savior of the human race, God’s saints laud him, for Jesus Christ is the wealth, the wisdom, the strength, and the blessing of God. In his creative activity God is the glory and honor and power of his people, but this creative activity of his glory and honor and power can be seen now in full measure only through Jesus Christ as his followers recognize and see in him the wealth and wisdom and strength and blessing of God. And it is also through Christ’s wealth and wisdom and strength and blessing that God’s people receive from God the gift of salvation and the gifts of his creative activity, now because of and through the proclamation of the Gospel. Then in worship of God through the Christ the saints give it all back to God and his Christ in acknowledgement that everything comes from God and belongs to him. (CC p. 143)

The Lamb of God - Excurses

The Lamb of God is a beautiful concept that is derived from the OT. Perhaps there is no other description or title of Jesus Christ that so touches the heart of the Christian. Related to it is the idea that Jesus Christ is also the Good Shepherd. Because Jesus was the Lamb of God who was sacrificed for the sins of the people, he became as a result their Shepherd. It is not by accident that the twenty-third psalm is possibly the single most quoted chapter of the Bible, for it prophetically draws together what Christ means to his followers. John in his gospel relates to us how John the Baptist pointed out Jesus as the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world (Jn 1:29). John's gospel also describes how Jesus is the Good Shepherd (John 10). Jesus became the Good Shepherd by laying down his life for the sheep (Jn 10:11). In Revelation Jesus is referred to as both the Lamb of God and as the Shepherd of God's people (7:17).

Both motifs, the Lamb of God and the Good Shepherd, are deeply embedded in the OT. According to the author of Hebrews, the lambs (also bulls and rams) prescribed for sacrifice in the OT were examples or patterns (*ὑποδείγματα*, Heb 9:23) of the sacrifice of Christ's death (Heb 9:6–10:18). Peter says that Christ, as a blameless and spotless Lamb, redeemed God's people by his blood (1 Pet 1:18–20). That brings to mind the kinds of lambs that were required for sacrifice in the OT (Lev 3:1–2, 7–8; 4:32–34; Num 6:12). Isaiah prophetically describes how the Suffering Servant carried the guilt of the sheep who had gone astray and was thus led like a lamb to the slaughter (Is 53:5–7; cf. also Jer 11:19). Ezekiel speaks of Yahweh becoming the Shepherd of his scattered sheep (Ezek 34:11–16), and how he will do this by placing over his flock one Shepherd, his Servant, a new David, who would tend and lead the sheep. Thus Yahweh will save his flock (Ezek 34:22–24; cf. Is 40:10–11; Micah 5:2–4 [MT 5:1–3]). Throughout the OT God was thus looked upon as the Shepherd of his people (Gen. 48:15–16; 1 Chr. 11:1–2; Ps. 28:9; 78:52, 70–72; 80:1–2 {MT 80:2–3}; Jer. 31:1–11; Micah 7:14). (CC pp. 148–149)

In particular, the Passover lamb played an important role in the liturgical and devotional life of the people of the OT. The sacrifice of the lamb and the eating of it initiated the Passover festival. The lamb had to be a year-old male and without defect (Ex 12:5; Num 28:19). Before the first Passover meal was eaten the blood of the lamb had to be smeared on the doorframes of the house. The Passover sacrifice and meal were celebrated in commemoration of the deliverance from slavery in Egypt. On the night of the first Passover, as the Passover lamb was eaten, the Lord destroyed the firstborn sons of Egypt. But he passed over the houses of the Israelites because of the blood of the lambs smeared on the doorframes of their homes (Ex. 12:1–30; Num. 9:1–14; Deut. 16:1–8; 2 Chr. 35:1–19). (CC pp. 148–149)

The slaying of the firstborn sons of the Egyptians and the redemption of the firstborn sons of the Israelites (Ex 13:1–16) could have been a picture of God's promised sacrifice of his own Son for the redemption of the world (see also Gen 22:1–18). Such an explicit connection is made in the NT. Paul in 1 Cor 5:7 says that Christ is the sacrificed Passover Lamb. And in the accounts of the Passover meal before Christ's death, there is an apparent connection between Christ's body and blood and his coming death, and the Passover lamb whose blood was shed (Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24; Lk 22:20). Apart from Paul, however, no other NT author explicitly calls Christ the Passover Lamb, but the fact that Paul does so—and does so without explanation—seems to imply that such a connection was widely known. Certainly it was known to the early church fathers, for they often saw in the Passover lamb a type of the sacrifice of Christ. (CC pp. 148–149)

Of NT authors, John makes the most use of the concept of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God. The OT picture of the lamb and its shed blood introduces Jesus to the public at his baptism (Jn 1:29, 36). John emphasizes the blood and water from Jesus' side at his death (Jn 19:34). In 1 Jn 1:7–9, the blood of Jesus cleanses the sins of those who confess. Together with the water and the Spirit, the blood testifies that Jesus is God's Son (1 Jn 5:5–9). And in Revelation it is the picture of the Lamb who was slain that is used to introduce the Lord Christ at his presentation to God on his heavenly throne (5:6, 9, 12–13), and it is by

the blood of the Lamb that the saints of God also stand before his heavenly Father (7:13–17). (CC pp. 148-149)

While the Christology of Revelation deals primarily with the exaltation of Jesus Christ and his glorious reign, the foundation for this exalted Christology is the theology of the Lamb of God, who suffered and died and rose again. By this suffering, death, and victory he merited the eternal glory of his Father, the glory he now shares with his people. Throughout Revelation the exalted Christ is the focus of the prophetic message. But also throughout the message of Revelation there is a constant reminder that Jesus Christ is the exalted Son of Man and Lord of lords and King of kings because he was and is the Lamb of God, who was sacrificed for the sins of God's people. (Rev. 1:18; 2:8; 5:6-13; 6:1, 16; 7:9-17; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1-5, 10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:6-9; 21:9, 22-27; 22:1-3) (CC pp. 148-149)

power ... praise! See David's farewell prayer in 1Ch 29:10–19. The attributes increase from three in 4:9–11 to four in 5:13 to seven in 5:12; 7:12. – The Lamb is the one worthy of all the power and praise of heaven because he fully accepted his assignment from the Father and was obedient, even unto death. (CSB)

5:13 *heaven ... earth ... under the earth.* See note on v. 3. (CSB)

Depicts the fulfillment of the prophecy that “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Phil. 2:10). (TL SB)

And so all creation renders equal praise to both God on his throne and to the Lamb with the ascriptive words of “[all] the blessing and the honor and the glory and the dominion [κράτος]” (5:13). Finally then, all the ascriptive words of worship and praise are given equally to God and to the Lamb, all except “wisdom” and “wealth,” which remain alone with the Lord Christ. (CC pp. 143-144)

Jesus Christ is both “the Word” (ὁ λόγος, Jn 1:1) and “the Wisdom” (ἡ σοφία) of God (1 Cor 1:21). While the *creative power* of God can be discerned in the things he has made (the natural revelation of God, Rom 1:18–23) so that people should honor and glorify God (Rom. 1:21; cf. Job 12:710; Ps. 4:2{MT 4:3}; 19:1 {MT 19:2} 97:6-7; 148:1-12), God's *Word* is *incarnate* and his *Wisdom* is *embodied* and recognized only (by faith) in Jesus Christ. This is especially seen to be true when wisdom is connected with wealth. Wealth (πλοῦτος) in this context refers to spiritual, not material, wealth. It sums up everything that Christ has done to redeem and save the human race. *It is only in Christ that the human race receives and acknowledges the “wealth” of God's saving grace, and it is only in the Lord Christ that the “wisdom” of God is received and acknowledged, especially that wisdom which leads the human heart in repentance to a saving faith.* Thus “wisdom” and “wealth” are credited alone to Jesus Christ, for these cannot be seen or received by way of the “natural knowledge” of God but only through the knowledge of and faith in Jesus Christ. (CC pp. 143-144)

5:14 Except for the One on the throne (the Father; v. 1) and the sevenfold Spirit (v. 6) everyone in heaven and earth is worshiping Jesus. (TL SB)

The four winged creatures conclude the stanzas of this great Te Deum, the “new song” (5:9) of praise to the Lamb and to God for the salvation of God's people (5:9–10, 12–13), by pronouncing “amen” (5:14). The imperfect tense of λέγω (ἔλεγον, “saying,” 5:14) suggests that, as the heavenly hosts were singing the new stanza of the Te Deum, the four winged creatures were continually saying or singing “amen.” But especially at the end does their “amen” ring out in affirmation, “This is most certainly true.” As the four creatures initiated the great Te Deum with the Trisagion (ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος; *Ter Sanctus*) in 4:8, so now they conclude this stanza with the affirming “amen.” The heavenly hosts, both saints and angels, under the direction of the choir masters (the four winged creatures), thus voice this mighty hymn to God, their

Creator and to the victorious Lamb. But it is in particular the *saints of God*, as represented by the twenty-four elders, who, at the crescendo of the four winged creatures' "amen," conclude the worship of God as their Savior in Christ by falling down before him (5:14). (CC pp. 144-147)

The Enthronement and the Celebration

This glorious vision of God's heavenly majesty and the coronation and enthronement of Jesus Christ are among the most beautiful chapters in the entire Bible. Revelation 4 and 5 picture the end result of God's creation and in particular God's redemption and restoration of the human race through his Son, Jesus Christ. This is where the whole story of God's revelation to humanity ends: before his heavenly throne, under the reign of Jesus Christ. For the whole purpose of God's activity toward all peoples and his creation is that it all would end in the worship and praise of God as the Creator and Savior through his Son (See Jn. 14:1-3; 17:24; Eph. 2:1-7; Phil. 1:21-23; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Peter 1:3-9). The actual conclusion to this heavenly vision is when the new heaven and earth have come about at the resurrection in the End (20:11-22:5). (CC pp. 144-147)

When did the enthronement of Jesus Christ, pictured in Revelation 4-5, take place? The best answer appears to be that it took place at the ascension of the Lord Christ for the following reasons. It is certain that it took place after the suffering and death and resurrection of Jesus, for the victorious Lamb appears in the scene as one who has been slain but now is alive (5:6). The Scriptures reveal that Jesus Christ would come into his heavenly glory after his resurrection. In his intercessory prayer for his disciples (John 17), Jesus prays that finally they might be with him to see his glory—a reference to his glory at the right hand of God in his heavenly majesty (Jn 17:24). In the accounts of the transfiguration, the glory of the Christ which was displayed was the glory that he would come into after his death and resurrection (see especially Lk 9:31-32). Just before Stephen was led away to his martyrdom, he looked into heaven by the Spirit and saw Jesus Christ in glory at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55-56). According to Peter, the exaltation of Jesus at the right hand of God was after the resurrection and before the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, that is, at his ascension (Acts 2:32-35; cf. Jn 7:39; Acts 3:12-13). (CC pp. 144-147)

Revelation 4 and 5 are a dramatization of the exaltation of Jesus Christ at the right hand of God, as it appeared from heaven's view. The description of Acts 1:6-11 is from the perspective of those on earth. We thus have two complementary visual descriptions of Christ's ascension. As the disciples saw the Lord taken up from them to disappear into the heavens, at the same time Jesus was received by his heavenly Father, as pictured in Revelation 4 and 5. At his ascension he was enthroned and crowned as Lord so as to rule everything on behalf of his Father. The action of God giving the scroll to the Lamb represents this coronation and enthronement. What John sees in Revelation 4 and 5 is a reenactment of that which, in earthly time, had taken place some years before, at the Mount of Olives (Lk 24:50-51). However, the celebration that began and was initiated at the Lord's enthronement was still going on when John saw the dramatization of it. And that celebration is still going on and will continue into eternity. The vision of Christ's coronation at his ascension in Revelation 4 and 5 is given as if it were in the Greek perfect tense. What John saw actually happened in the past, but the results of that tremendous event are in the present and extend into the future. Christ's exaltation as Lord continues, as does also the celebration with the singing of the "new song" in the Te Deum, for that "new song" is ever new and the One it celebrates is ever present with his church. (CC pp. 144-147)

There has never been a celebration like that which began when the Son returned to his heavenly Father. For some two thousand years it has been taking place, and it will continue forever. Heaven broke into joyful song and celebration when the Son came back victorious. He was received by the Father and was given the authority, then and up to the End, to rule everything on behalf of God (see 1 Cor 15:20-28). But one can imagine how, not long before this, all heaven was in mourning when the Son was crowned with thorns and placed on a cross—witness the darkness that came over the face of the earth (Mk 15:33). In reality Jesus' coronation, by which he created a kingdom for God and by which he himself became a king,

was at his suffering and death (see Jn 12:27–33; Rev 5:9–10). But while his kingship was earned in his suffering and death, it would be a kingdom and a reign in glory. The crown of thorns gave way to a crown of many diadems (Rev 19:11–14; cf. Mt 26:63–64). The glory of the cross is now fully seen in the glory of the exaltation of Christ at the right hand of God in his heavenly majesty. Heaven is no longer in mourning; celebration has taken its place forever. (CC pp. 144-147)

Of the many illustrations that Jesus gave for different aspects of the kingdom of God, perhaps none better illustrates the mourning over the lost son and the celebration that takes its place at his return than that of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11–32). As the younger son in the parable, the prodigal, left his father’s love and fellowship to waste his inheritance and to ruin his life, so also the Christian now recognizes that the whole human race once became lost, was in a state of ruin and subject to death. Would the heavenly Father ever receive back the son who had shamed him, denied him, disowned him? Yes he would. He does not will that the sinner die, but that he repent and live (Ezek 18:32). And so the heavenly Father has sent his own Son, Jesus Christ, on the mission of salvation. The Son of God left his heavenly Father, took the place of the prodigal, and suffered in his place. The shame and eternal ruin that was the prodigal’s had now become that of Jesus. Jesus Christ is like the prodigal son in the sense that he became such in the place of the real prodigal, the human race. (CC pp. 144-147)

As he left his Father’s house to undertake this task, sorrow must have filled the Father’s heart and the hearts of the heavenly host. And as the Son was at the “pig’s trough,” the cross, that sorrow must have reached a terrible depth of agony. But when the Son finished with the suffering, heaven burst forth into a jubilation that is still ringing the rafters and the portals of God’s heavenly court. The Son had come back and celebration broke out. Now the real prodigal, all people from every race and tongue, can return to the heavenly Father, knowing that they will be received because the Son of God was received. And when each individual prodigal in repentance and faith comes to the heavenly Father, he or she will be received in joy and honor just as surely as was the Son, Jesus Christ (see Mt 18:10–14; Lk 15:7). For Christ won the victory for God’s people so that they could thus be reconciled to their Father and be received by him. (CC pp. 144-147)

The Enthronement and the Prophetic Message

Finally, this vision of God’s heavenly glory and the enthronement of Jesus Christ and of the celebration begun and now ongoing not only introduces the prophetic message of Revelation, it also dominates and controls it and shows how it is all going to end. Jesus Christ is the Lord of the message. After his coronation (Revelation 4–5), he himself (6:1–7:17) introduces the message to John. (The message from 8:1 to 22:5 is *from Jesus through* angels.) And Jesus controls it for the purpose of strengthening the saints, of aiding his church to carry out her mission on earth, and of judging the powers and persons of wickedness and evil. *Everything seen and heard in the prophetic message is to be interpreted in view of this inaugural vision of Christ’s coronation, for then and only then will the individual components of the message yield their proper interpretations.* (CC pp. 144-147)

GOSPEL – John 21:1-19

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: ² Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ³ “I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. ⁴ Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. ⁵ He called out to them, **“Friends, haven’t you any fish?”** “No,” they answered. ⁶ He said, **“Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.”** When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. ⁷ Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, **“It is the Lord!”** As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, **“It is the Lord,”** he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the

water.⁸ The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.⁹ When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.¹⁰ Jesus said to them, **“Bring some of the fish you have just caught.”**¹¹ Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.¹² Jesus said to them, **“Come and have breakfast.”** None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord.¹³ Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.¹⁴ This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

21:1-2, 15-19 Chapter 21 of John’s Gospel is often seen as an epilogue, following as it does a rather satisfactory conclusion in 20:30–31. Near the beginning of the book, Jesus had called his first disciples—among them, Simon Peter (1:40–42). At the end of the Gospel, the risen Jesus appears to seven disciples and, in particular, to Simon Peter (vv 2–3). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

Much has happened between Jesus’ first call to Peter early in the Gospel and the renewal of this call in the last chapter (21:15–19). Above all, by highlighting Peter’s threefold response to Jesus (“Yes, Lord; you know that I love you,” vv 15–17), the Gospel writer draws attention implicitly to the disciple’s earlier infamous threefold denial of his Lord (18:15–18, 25–27). More important, the author wants to show how the risen Jesus ultimately restores Simon Peter in the call to be his disciple in the world so that he might again follow his Lord by bearing the cross (vv 18–19) in the work of feeding and tending his sheep (vv 15–17). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

21:1-4 In the typical style of John this story is told in great detail. Most of the disciples present are mentioned by name. The key players in the dialog are Peter and John. John is only referred to as one of the sons of Zebedee – later called “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (v 7). The emphasis in this text is the presence of the resurrected Christ and all that He means for life. The miraculous catch of fish is not the primary focus. Although the resurrection has taken place, the fishermen still fish. Life goes on. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 2)

21:1 JESUS APPEARED – A key verb, *phaneroō*, “to reveal,” is used in v 1. “It is associated with the revelatory dimension of Jesus’ miracles at 2:11 and 9:3 and it is used to summarize the purpose of Jesus ministry at 1:31 and 17:6” (*The New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol 9 [Nashville: Abingdon, 1995] 856). The emphasis in this text is the presence of the resurrected Christ and all that he means for life. The miraculous catch of fish is not the primary focus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 2)

The disciples returned to Galilee after the appearance of Jesus to Thomas (Mt. 28:7). Jesus unveiled His glory and His triumph over death. John again uses the verb that described Jesus self-revelation at the wedding of Cana (John 2:11). (TLSB)

The word “appeared” is a verb that occurs nine times in this Gospel and seventeen times in John’s writings. They always denote the self-disclosure of Jesus to man. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

Sea of Tiberias. See note on 6:1. (CSB)

21:2 *Simon Peter*. See note on Mk 1:16. (CSB)

Thomas. See note on 11:16. (CSB)

NATHANAEL – Since his call into ministry (1:45–50), this is the first time that Nathanael is mentioned by name. At his call Jesus said that he would “see greater things.” This certainly points in that direction. The account sounds somewhat like Lk 5:5, but they are not the same experience. Although the resurrection has taken place, the fishermen still fish. Life goes on. However, after a night of fishing, these experienced fishermen have caught nothing. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 2)

sons of Zebedee. Not named in this Gospel (see Mt 4:21). (CSB)

TWO OTHERS – Never identified. (TLSB)

21:3-14 Unlike in the Synoptic Gospels (Mt 4:18–22; Mk 1:16–20; Lk 5:1–11), John’s account of Jesus’ call to Peter and other disciples to follow him had not described them specifically as “fishers of men.” However, Luke’s account of Jesus’ call to Peter by the Lake of Gennesaret (Lk 5:1; cf. Jn 21:1, the Sea of Tiberias) after a lousy night of catching no fish, the great catch that followed after heeding Jesus’ words, and the commissioning of the disciple as one who “will be catching men” (Lk 5:10) has basically all the elements of John’s resurrection narrative here (esp. vv 3–8). The only exception is that in the Johannine account, Jesus is renewing his call to Peter (instead of calling him for the first time) and only describes this call implicitly as catching all kinds of fish (vv 5–6, 8, 10–11). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

The beloved disciple’s expression “It is the Lord!” (v 7) functions as a recognition of the risen Jesus’ presence in their midst through his words and works. Through his words, the Lord renews his call to the disciples and especially restores Peter to the community of the apostles. The Lord is also the one who blesses the catch, so that apart from Jesus, the ministry of the Church in the world bears no fruit. The implication is that the risen Lord will accompany his disciples as they go out into the world. The meal scene by the sea (vv 9–14) is a sign of table fellowship between Jesus and his disciples. Indeed, “come” is a typical call to discipleship used by Jesus (v 12, cf. 1:39). Discipleship is renewed and sustained by Jesus himself, who enters into fellowship with us and reveals himself to us as our Lord. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

As mentioned above, in John’s epilogue, Peter’s call is described more explicitly as a work of shepherding (vv 15–17). In the broader context of the resurrection appearances, the risen Jesus’ call to his disciples can be further described as a sending with authority into the world to remit and retain sins (20:19–23). Such authority to absolve sins is certainly essential to being a disciple called to catch all kinds of fish (men) and feed the sheep (lambs). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

21:3-4 Once more, this time in Galilee amid the everyday occupations of a fisherman, the disciples behold Jesus in the glory of His gracious lordship. (TLSB)

21:3 I AM GOING OUT TO FISH – Life goes on. In fact when Jesus says “therefore go and make disciples” (Matthew 28:19) it means as you are going through daily life.

There is nothing in the context or Scripture to warrant accusing the disciples of weakness of faith or abandoning their Apostolic calling. In fact, the context indicates that they were where, and were doing precisely as, Jesus wanted them to be and do. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

that night. Nighttime was favored by fishermen in ancient times (as Aristotle, e.g., informs us). (CSB)

21:4-6 These verses detail the miracle catch of fish, which leads the disciples to the recognition of Jesus on the shore. Jesus calls the disciples *paidia*, “friends” or “children,” a word expressing familial intimacy. This is significant in light of Good Friday, the denial of Jesus by Peter, and the desertion of the disciples. This is a grace word, which speaks hope to all of us who have denied him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 2)

21:4 STOOD – The same verb is used of Jesus in 20:19 and 26. He had gone before them to Galilee. He was already there. Now He makes Himself visible. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

did not realize that it was Jesus. Cf. Mary Magdalene (see note on 20:14). (CSB)

The fishermen did not recognize that the person on the shore was Jesus. The boat was 100 yards from shore (v. 8), and the light of day was still dim. (TLSB)

This might have been because of the misty dawning light and the distance between Him and the disciples. (PBC)

Lenski asks: “Did the morning haze on the water render sight indistinct? Did Jesus will not to be recognized at once? Or was his appearance quite different from the previous appearances?” The simple answer lies in the verb *phaneqoo* (manifested), twice is 1 and once in 14. They did not recognize Him until He will it. There is nothing in Scripture to warrant the idea that Jesus was becoming increasingly “heavenly” and therefore more difficult to recognize. Estin (was) in Greek indirect discourse always maintains the tense of the original direct discourse. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

21:5 FRIENDS – This is the Greek word for a loving title for children in a close family relationship. This was extraordinary considering how the apostles had acted during Holy Week. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 2)

ESV has “children.” Not a common form of address, but perhaps equivalent to present-day “boys” or “guys.” (TLSB)

Whether we translate “children” (KJV, RSV, NASB), “friends” (NEB, NIV), or “boys” (Beck), the point is that Jesus is very familiar with the disciples. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

HAVEN’T YOU ANY FISH – Whether the questions means “Haven’t you any fish?” or “haven’t you caught any fish?” The point is that He wants them to confess their need. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

21:6 THROW YOUR NET – Jesus acts as a “spotter” from the shore, a strategy for identifying the movement of a shoal of fish. (TLSB)

Note the beautiful command and promise. They were instrumental in performing this miracle. They obeyed immediately and the miracle followed immediately. Many times in life the commands of the Lord seem foolish. But faithful obedience leads to carrying out His will and then we are astounded at what He accomplishes through us. It is remarkable that they obeyed before they recognized Him. That was true faith. Cf. Gal 2:20. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

UNABLE TO HAUL – The Greek verb (drag) is used of dragging dead weight. They just could not do it. It shows the enormity of the catch. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

21:7-8 The great unexpected catch of fish enables John to recognize Jesus. Impulsive Peter is so excited he quickly puts on his outer garment, which had been removed for work, and jumps into the water. Typical Peter—everyone else comes to shore by boat—Peter by water. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 2)

21:7 *disciple whom Jesus loved.* See note on 13:23. (CSB)

IT IS THE LORD – Reaction is prompted when Jesus’ Word produced the miraculous catch of fish. (TLSB)

Kretzmann quotes an old commentator: “John had the keener insight, Peter the greater and ardor.” But both show how wonderful the resurrected Lord was to them. To one He gave the ability of recognition, to the other the desire to come to Jesus. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

his outer garment. It is curious that he put on this garment (the word appears only here in the NT) preparatory to jumping into the water. But Jews regarded a greeting as a religious act that could be done only when one was clothed. Peter may have been preparing himself to greet the Lord. (CSB)

The translations are interesting: RSV and NASB: “For he was stripped for work,” NIV: “For he had taken it (the coat) off,” Beck: “He put on the coat he had taken off.” (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

It was used as a coat to ward off the morning chill. (TLSB)

21:8 TOWING THE NET – They had been unable to drag the net into the boat and so they approach land dragging the net in the water. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

21:9 FISH AND BREAD – Same menu as at the feeding of 5000 (6:1-14) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 2)

Here is the second miracle. He has provided fire, fish and bread. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

burning coals. Lit. “charcoal,” as in 18:18 (“fire”; see note on 18:26) (CSB).

This was a small, hot fire kindled expressly to make breakfast. Jesus was serving them again by providing fish and bread. (TLSB)

Jesus has prepared breakfast for his friends. The menu is the same as the feeding of the 5,000 (6:1–14). The catch of fish and the meal testify to the physical presence of Jesus. His resurrection was not just in the minds of his followers, nor was it the creation of a faithful few. Jesus is alive, physically alive! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 2)

21:10 BRING SOME – It surely does not mean that Jesus needed additional fish to prepare breakfast. Lenski’s explanation is that Peter is to throw back the little fish and bring only the larger ones. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

21:11 *Peter ... dragged the net ashore.* Appears to mean that Peter headed up the effort, for the whole group had not been able previously to haul the net into the boat (v. 6). (CSB)

Peter alone dragged the net on land, something which all of them had been unable to do while still out in the water, i.e., to drag the net into the boat. Kretzmann: “His love for the Master and the excitement of the occasion gave him almost superhuman strength.” (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

153 – Lutheran commentators list both ancient and modern idea of symbolism in the number 153 and then reject them. The number shows how bountiful God’s gifts are and the precision with which the Lord has recorded His Word. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

the net was not torn. In contrast to the nets mentioned in Lk 5:6. (CSB)

The miracle continues to grow. First catching fish at the wrong time, then catching so many and finally this fact. It shows us that we should not be surprised at what God can do through us.

An astonishing catch – so impressive that the disciples actually counted them. Additional details enhance the extraordinary nature of the catch. Cf Luke 5:1-11. (TLSB)

21:12 HAVE BREAKFAST – This is the Greek word used elsewhere for a main meal (Lk 11:37). (TLSB)

Again the Lord commands and gives. What He commands He Himself bestows. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

KNEW IT WAS THE LORD – Like other post-resurrection appearances, this one awed the disciples. (TLSB)

He Himself had thoroughly convinced them that it was He, the Lord. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

21:13 He comes in the sense of being the Host and taking the initiative. To call this allusion to the Eucharist is ridiculous. Those who deny the true nature and efficacy of baptism and the Lord’s Supper seemingly have a bad conscience. They are constantly finding “allusions” where there are none. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

21:14 *the third time.* The third appearance to a group of disciples (20:19–23, 24–29), though there had been other appearances to individuals. (CSB)

This means to the disciples as a body. Stoeckhardt: “With this two-fold miracle the Risen Lord has assured the disciples of all ages that He can and will bless His own, who do His will and work on earth, with earthly blessings and daily bread.” (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

21:1–14 During Jesus’ third appearance after the resurrection, He performs another miracle and serves as host at a meal for the disciples. Jesus shows once again His servant heart, teaching us to follow in His way. We bless and serve one another because our gracious Savior continues to bless and serve us, especially in His Holy Supper. • As I come regularly to Your Holy Supper, dear Lord, prepare me to receive You and Your gifts worthily. Amen. (TLSB)

¹⁵ When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “**Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?**” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” ¹⁶ Again Jesus said, “**Simon son of John, do you truly love me?**” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “**Take care of my sheep.**” ¹⁷ The third time he said to him, “**Simon son of John, do you love me?**” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “**Do you love me?**” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “**Feed my sheep.**” ¹⁸ **I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you**

wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.”¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

21:15-17 - The *Gospel* focuses on Christ’s grace to St. Peter but holds in focus the office and work of the pastor. The broader context of the miraculous catch of fish and the remote context of Peter’s denial of Christ place all the efficacy of the office of pastor in the Word of God. In Luke 5 they had caught nothing. The huge catch revealed God’s blessing and promise as they now began the work of catching human beings. Peter recognizes the Lord, dives into the water, and eagerly swims to meet Jesus, betraying his characteristic impetuosity. Yet boasting or reliance on self disappear in the presence of the Lord. Peter would now become shepherd par excellence, not by his strength, but by the Lord’s. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 1)

Jesus eating with the disciples establishes two things: (1) Incarnation and resurrection belong together. Unlike Gnosticism—ancient or modern—Christians do not fly away from the concrete into some bodiless spiritual realm. The concrete delivery of forgiveness in the means of grace entails a concrete deliverer today (thus AC V after AC IV!). (2) Jesus reestablishes table fellowship with his disciples, especially Peter, who has so miserably failed him. Personal failings are overcome by Gospel forgiveness! Comfort! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 1)

21:15–17 *love*. † The Greek word for “love” in Jesus’ first two questions is different from that in his third question and in all Peter’s answers. It is uncertain whether a distinction in meaning is intended since John often made slight word variations, apparently for stylistic reasons. Note also other variations in this passage: “sheep” and “lambs”; “feed” and “take care of.” Also, no distinction is made between these two words elsewhere in this Gospel. In this passage, however, they occur together, and the variations seem too deliberate to be explained on stylistic grounds. “Truly love” refers to a love in which the entire personality is involved. “Love” refers to spontaneous natural affection or fondness in which emotion plays a more prominent role than will. Whatever interpretation is adopted, the important thing is that in so serious a matter as the reinstatement of Peter, the great question was whether he loved Jesus. (CSB)

21:15 WHEN THEY HAD FINISHED EATING – When they had finished eating” provides the incarnational hook to the previous resurrection appearances—concrete resurrection, concrete means of grace, concrete man to deliver the means—all of it for surety. Jesus calls him “Simon son of Jonah,” signaling that Peter had not by his own strength and according to his own boast lived up to the name Jesus had given him, “Peter, Rock. Do you love (*agapas*) me more than these?” “These” could be the other disciples or the fishing equipment. Or the question could ask, “Do you love me more than these others love me?” The latter is most likely, since Peter boasted of such devotion (Mt 26:33). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 1)

SIMON SON OF JOHN – This title signals that Peter had not by his own strength and according to his own boast lived up to the name Jesus had given him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1)

more than these. † May mean “more than you love these men” or “more than these men love me” or “more than you love these things” (i.e., the fishing gear). Perhaps the second is best, for Peter had claimed a devotion above that of the others (cf. 13:37; Mt 26:33; Mk 14:29). But see notes on 1:5; 3:3; 6:35, 66; 16:9. Peter did not take up the comparison, and Jesus did not explain it. (CSB)

Peter tended to boast of his commitment before the other disciples (e.g., 13:37). Hus: “As for the third virtues, love, it is plain that Peter had this certain respect above others, as appears from the fervor of his acts which fittingly proceed from greater love” (The Church p. 86). (TLSB)

Here at the lakeside Jesus takes Peter in hand in order to eradicate from his heart the last trace of false self-confidence. (Lenski)

YES – Emphatic. (TLSB)

YOU KNOW THAT I LOVE YOU – Philo which expresses the love of mere personal affection or liking, including even the passion where the context requires "brotherly love" (Philadelphia). He is humble now. (Lenski)

"You know that I love (*philō*) you." Peter uses a word that expresses emotional longing, but not the altruistic word *agapē* (a matter of the intellect and will), which Jesus uses. He is humbled, yet speaks with faith, "You know, Lord." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 1)

Feed my lambs. Probably means much the same as "Take care of my sheep" (v. 16) and "Feed my sheep" (v. 17). (CSB)

The Lord was calling Peter away from his former profession to be a shepherd of His flock, a comparison for what would become the "pastoral" ministry. (TLSB)

In the Greek the word "feed" can be translated "continue to feed." (PBC)

"Feed (*boske*) my lambs (*arnia*)." Three imperatives, this the first, coincide with Peter's previous three denials. The imperative *boske* is to tend, feed or pasture. The undershepherd is to give the sheep the good care of Holy Baptism; absolution; the Lord's Supper; and the preached Word of forgiveness (1 and 2 Peter). "Lambs" indicates the special concern of Christ that the undershepherd tend the little ones as well as the sheep. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 1)

Christ's attitude toward children.

- a. Gentile – Is. 40:11
- b. Promises a reward for kindness to – Mt. 10:42
- c. Used child as example – Mt 18:2
- d. Said childlike spirit essential – Mt. 18:3-4
- e. Warned against despising – Mt. 18:10
- f. Commands reception of – Mk 9:37
- g. Said "suffer the little children to come... Mk. 10:14
- h. Observed children at play – Mt. 11:16
- i. Commanded they be fed spiritual food – Jn 21:15

Jesus here places His most loved possessions in Peter's care. The spiritual feeding and nourishing of children is here made the first part of the great apostolic office. (Lenski)

Many readers assume "lambs" here means "children." It's a fair assumption, since Jesus chooses His words deliberately and follows next, as if by contrast, with the tending of the "sheep." "Lambs" might also be a way of speaking of all Christians, and in particular of those who are new in the faith. John, for example, in his first letter refers to his readers repeatedly as his "dear children." (PBC)

21:16 JESUS – agape / PETER – philo

TAKE CARE OF MY SHEEP – "My sheep" are here the entire flock and thus include any lambs, though without mentioning them in particular. (Lenski)

“Take care of (*poimaine*) my sheep (*probata*).” “Take care of” (NIV) is a weak translation. Peter’s office and work will flow from Christ’s office and work as Good Shepherd (Jn 10:14; Heb 13:20). So also the pastoral office (1 Pet 5:2–4) is grounded in Christ’s own office as Chief Shepherd. The shepherd has a crook to poke the nose of the wolf who tries to sneak in among the sheep; to grab hold of the wayward sheep to direct it back to the fold (1 Pet 2:25). The office and work of “shepherding” God’s flock entails more than “taking care.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 1)

Luther: “God could rule the church through the Holy Spirit without the ministry, but He does not want to do this directly. Therefore He says to Peter: ‘Feed my Sheep. Go, preach, baptize, absolve’... Therefore Paul calls the apostles ‘fellow workmen with God’ (1 Cor 3:9). To be sure He alone works. But He does so through us” (AE 8:94-95). (TLSB)

Not only was Peter to feed the flock, but he was to watch over the flock, to be a shepherd to it. Besides feeding, that implied guiding, protecting, and comforting. (PBC)

21:17 THIRD TIME – Peter denied the Lord three time, and now the Lord invited him to declare his love for Him three times. (TLSB)

DO YOU LOVE ME – (philo) When Jesus twice asked about the higher love, once as to its degree compared with others, and then about its very presence, Peter with all due humility ventured to assert only the lower form of love. But now in this third question Jesus probed even for this lower love, of which Peter felt so sure that for its presence in his heart he could appeal to the omniscience of Jesus. This grieved him deeply. But he could not be spared the pain. In his denial even all common affection and regard for Jesus had been thrown to the winds. He claimed that he had not known the man etc. (Lenski)

you know all things. Peter’s replies stress Christ’s knowledge, not his own grasp of the situation. (CSB)

Peter cannot tell Jesus anything that He does not already know. (TLSB)

FEED MY SHEEP – Keep on feeding my sheep including the lambs. (PBC)

The Lord’s threefold calling restored Peter for future service to Him and to His Church. (TLSB)

21:18-19 According to tradition, Peter was crucified in Rome under Nero in AD 68. Jesus, in an enigmatic way, was referring to Peter’s martyrdom. Peter would follow Jesus in suffering and death, glorifying the Father (cf. 12:23-28). (TLSB)

Enigmatic Sayings - Whereas Matthew and Luke tend to record Jesus’ parables, John records many difficult sayings of Jesus that appear throughout the Gospel and unify its composition (e.g., 2:4, 19; 3:3, 8; 4:10, 32; 5:17; 6:35, 51, 53, 70; 7:6, 34, 37-38; 8:21, 58; 9:39; 13:33; 14:4; 15:17; 18:36-37; 21:18, 22). John often notes the trouble the disciples and the crowds have deciphering Jesus’ intent by recording their questions. In some cases the disciples only understand Jesus’ words much later (cf. 2:22; 21:19). Jesus refers to His sayings as “figures of speech” (Greek *paroimia*, 16:25), an expression that commonly describes proverbs. They are often prophetic or have the character of riddles, demanding deep reflection. Jesus’ many “I am” statements should be included among these enigmatic sayings. (TLSB)

21:18 *stretch out your hands.* The early church understood this as a prophecy of crucifixion. (CSB)

Jesus had accomplished His purpose with Peter and restored him to his position as shepherd of Jesus’ flock. Now Peter was ready to hear what would happen to him while doing Jesus’ bidding. (PBC)

21:19 *the kind of death.* Peter would be a martyr. Tradition indicates that he was crucified upside down. (CSB)

Although it sounds gruesome and depressing to imagine, it would be Peter's final act of glorifying God. In faith, Peter had eternal life. In faith, Peter would carry God's Word to the people and, as God's shepherd, care for them. In faith, Peter would give the grandest of all testimonies to God's glory by dying as a martyr and entering the Father's house of glory. (PBC)

FOLLOW ME – Jesus had used those words with Peter at the beginning of His ministry (Matthew 4:19). That time Peter literally walked with Jesus and learned from Him day after day. It meant to stay true to the Word of Jesus and continue to teach it, to remain faithful even to the martyr's death in glory to God. It meant the sure hope of reuniting with Jesus again in heaven. (PBC)

21:15–19 In His threefold exchange with Peter—who in pride and weakness failed His Lord—Jesus restores this disciple for service to Him and His flock. Our own past sins and failures make us feel unworthy to serve God. But Jesus continues to comfort shepherds and the souls they serve with the forgiveness of sins and with compassion. • Great Shepherd of the sheep, bless all pastors who bring Your consolation and peace to Your people. Amen. (TLSB)