

Introduction to Chapter 7

The structure of the flood narrative in Gen 6–9 indicates that the main theme concerns why God preserved Noah, not why he sent the deluge (Gen 8:1).¹ As a righteous and blameless person, Noah wholeheartedly committed himself to his relationship with the Lord (Gen 6:9).² Thus, he would not suffer the destruction which would come upon the rest of humanity (Gen 6:13–14).³

By filling the earth with violence (Gen 6:11),⁴ rather than with people and animals (Gen 1:20–22, 26–28),⁵ humanity had ruined the planet in God’s sight (Gen 6:11–12).⁶ Since they had spoiled the earth by their sin, the Lord would complete its destruction. This is a textbook example of the punishment fitting the crime.⁷

Humanity’s progressive degradation called for immediate action,⁸ and God made an irrevocable decision.⁹ However, the Lord informed Noah of his plan to destroy all that had been corrupted yet preserve a righteous remnant (Gen 6:14–18). This would include representatives of the creation that humanity was intended to steward (Gen 1:28; Gen 6:19–20).¹⁰ Unlike in other Ancient Near Eastern flood accounts, Noah’s salvation was neither an accident nor a thwarting of God’s plan.¹¹

As a result, the Lord specified how to build the ark rather than leaving the plan of escape to Noah’s imagination.¹² The instructions are quite brief, giving us minimal details (Gen 6:14–16).¹³ However, they are specific enough to imply that Noah was not a shipbuilder by trade.¹⁴ No rudders or sails are mentioned for Noah’s boat, indicating that it was never intended to be navigated. Noah’s fate was in God’s hands (Gen 7:16).¹⁵

Only after receiving construction plans did Noah learn why the Lord commanded him to build a gigantic boat. He planned to bring a flood of water to ruin all flesh which had breath (Gen 6:17).¹⁶ Every human and animal would perish. The breath (*ruach*) of life which the Lord had given, he would take away.¹⁷

Noah then discovered why God ordered him to build a boat which was far too large for him and his family.¹⁸ The Lord began by saying, “And I shall establish my covenant with you.” Even before the rain began, the Lord intended to provide for the continuation of human and animal life.¹⁹ By means of an ark, God would save the righteous seed of the woman (Gen 3:15) as well as representatives of the nonhuman creation (Gen 6:18–20).²⁰

¹Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, 124.

²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 133.

³Walton, *Genesis*, 311.

⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 134.

⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 171.

⁶Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land, 2nd Ed.*, 134.

⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 171–2.

⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 126.

⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 172.

¹⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 122.

¹¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 165.

¹²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 135.

¹³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 172.

¹⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 281.

¹⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 135.

¹⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 174.

¹⁷Note that the Hebrew word *ruach* means both “breath” and “spirit/Spirit,” <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/924/mode/2up>.

¹⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 175.

¹⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 284.

²⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 121.

The Lord said, “And you shall enter the ark: you and your sons and your sons’ wives with you.” The Lord would preserve the family structure of humanity, extending salvation to Noah’s children.²¹ Even today, those who have married can attest that a person does not marry one individual but into an entire family.

Noah was surely grateful that he and his sons would not have to find and capture two of every kind of animal.²² Instead, the Lord would guide them to the ark. On the other hand, they did gather and store enough food to sustain them and the animals (Gen 6:21). The effort necessary to build and equip the ark had to be expensive and exhausting. Yet, “Noah did according to all which God commanded him. Thus he did” (Gen 6:22). This brief statement provides insight into Noah’s character.²³ It emphatically affirms Noah’s complete obedience. Noah succeeded where Adam had failed (Gen 2:16–17; Gen 3:6).²⁴

By Twos and Sevens

1) Gen 7:1–4: Genesis 7 presumes the completion of the ark.²⁵ One hundred years have passed since Moses first introduced Noah (Gen 5:32; Gen 7:6). However, it remains unclear whether Noah dedicated all that time to building the boat. This third scene of the flood narrative consists of the Lord’s instructions for entering the boat Noah constructed. In the extended chiasm structure of Gen 6:9–9:19, it corresponds to Gen 8:15–17, when God commanded him to disembark.²⁶

Previously, Moses declared Noah’s righteousness (Gen 6:8–9, 22). For the first time, the Lord described Noah’s integrity.²⁷ “And the Lord said to Noah, ‘Enter, you and all of your household, into the ark, because you I have seen [as] righteous before me in this generation.’” Noah expressed his faith by building and equipping the ark as God commanded (Gen 6:14–22).²⁸ In contrast to wickedness and corruption wherever he looked (Gen 6:5, 12), here the Lord saw an upright person on the earth.²⁹

In Gen 6:19–20, God informed Noah that a pair of each kind of animal would come to the ark.³⁰ Now the Lord expanded that directive,³¹ saying, “From all the clean animals, you shall take to yourself seven [pairs]. Seven males and their females. And from the animals which are not clean, [from] these two [pairs], males and their females. Also, from the birds of the heavens, seven [pairs]. Seven male and female, to preserve [their] seed on the face of the earth.”³²

“Clean” (*tahor*) usually refers to ritual purity.³³ The most comprehensive lists of unclean animals appear in Lev 11 and Deut 14:3–20.³⁴ Unclean birds tend to consume live prey or scavenge for dead animals.³⁵ Not until after the flood receded would Noah understand

²¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 136.

²²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 284.

²³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 285.

²⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 176.

²⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 287.

²⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 176.

²⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 286.

²⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 137.

²⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 286.

³⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 176.

³¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 137.

³²The Hebrew text says “male and his female” for both clean and unclean animals. I have translated them as plurals for easier reading.

³³H. Ringgren, “טָהוֹר” (*tahor*), *TDNT* 5:287–96, 291.

³⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 138.

³⁵Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; New Haven and London: Doubleday, 1991), 662.

Gen 4–11 Chapter 7: God Opens the Heavens and the Earth (Gen 7:1–24) DT Plichta

the reason for the increased number of clean animals. First, Noah used a few birds to determine when everyone could leave the ark (Gen 8:6–12).³⁶

After disembarking, he sacrificed clean animals, and God gave him permission to consume them. Therefore, Noah needed extra clean animals to repopulate the earth (Gen 8:17).³⁷ However, the Lord saved even unclean animals from extinction.³⁸ As with other aspects of Jewish ceremonial law, such as Sabbath observance and sacrificial offerings (Gen 2:1–3; Gen 4:3–4), the notion of ritual purity began long before God spoke to Moses.³⁹ As a righteous man who walked with God, it appears that Noah understood this concept.⁴⁰

In a parallel Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) text, Atrahasis brought “whatever he had...clean animals...fat animals...he caught [and brought on board]. The winged birds of the heavens, the cattle...the wild creatures...he put on board.”⁴¹

After decades of Noah’s preparation, at last the foretold time arrived. The Lord said, “After seven days, I am sending rain on the earth [for] forty days and forty nights. And I shall wipe out all that subsists which I have made from the face of the ground.” Biblical Hebrew features fifteen different words which refer to rain. The one used here (*matar*), is the most common. It points to regular rainfall in terms of its strength (Job 38:26–27; Isa 30:23).⁴² However, in this case, it differed in duration.⁴³

In the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Noah figure Utnapishtim explained: “[On the sev]enth [day] the ship was completed...Six days and [six] nights blows the flood wind, as the south-storm sweeps the land. When the seventh day arrived, the flood (-carrying) south-storm subsided in the battle, which it had fought like an army. The sea grew quiet, the tempest was still, the flood ceased. I looked at the weather: stillness had set in.”⁴⁴

In that ANE account, Utnapishtim’s craftsmen built the enormous boat in seven days, a period equivalent to the duration of the flood. Given the scale of these monumental events, the amounts of time denoted in Genesis appear more realistic.⁴⁵

a) Read Gen 7:1–4. Why did God see Noah as righteous? What made seven pairs of each kind of clean animal necessary? How was this rain different from a typical storm? What would be the result?

A Reversal of Creation

b) Gen 7:5–16: This section comprises the fourth scene of the flood narrative. It describes Noah’s obedience, the passengers’ entrance into the ark, and the beginning of the flood.⁴⁶ As with Gen 1, Moses used several literary devices. This indicates that he had either received a

³⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 176.

³⁷Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 7:4.

³⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 287–8.

³⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 138.

⁴⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 177.

⁴¹Lambert and Millard, “Epic of Atra-Khasis,” in *RANE*, 29.

⁴²H. J. Zobel, “מָטָר” (*matar*), *TDOT* 8:250–65, 250–1.

⁴³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 288.

⁴⁴Speiser, “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 11:76, 127–32, 94,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n119/mode/2up.

⁴⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 177.

⁴⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 177.

Gen 4–11 Chapter 7: God Opens the Heavens and the Earth (Gen 7:1–24) DT Plichta

poem-like version of the flood story or that he added lyrical embellishments to the narrative account.⁴⁷ As a result, this scene consists of poetic narrative, full of tension and emotion.⁴⁸

Moses condensed all of Noah’s difficult work into this brief statement, “And Noah did according to all which the Lord had commanded him” (Gen 6:14–7:3). However, some details appear in Gen 7:6–9,⁴⁹ such as the date of the flood’s beginning, Noah’s age, who occupied the ark, and how much time Noah had to fill it.⁵⁰ Noah did what the Lord commanded, and God did what he promised. Both proved faithful to fulfill what the Lord said should occur.⁵¹

Throughout Gen 7:6–16a, Moses employed extended parallelism. After briefly describing what took place in Gen 7:6–9, he returned to the same topics with greater detail.⁵² In this case, Gen 7:6a matches Gen 7:11a; Gen 7:6b parallels Gen 7:11b–12; Gen 7:7 goes with Gen 7:13; Gen 7:8 correlates with Gen 7:14; and Gen 7:9a is like Gen 7:15–16a.⁵³ By repeating the same information with increasing precision, Moses heightened the tension of the narrative.⁵⁴ We shall focus upon the more detailed verses.

Moses began Gen 7:10 by writing, “And it happened after the seven days, that the water of the flood came upon the earth.” The Lord had promised this seven-day period in Gen 7:4.⁵⁵ This verse begins a small chiasm within the extended reverse parallelism of the flood account (Gen 6:9–9:19):

- A 7 days (time before flood after God commands Noah to enter the ark, Gen 7:10)
- B 40 days (raining on the earth, Gen 7:12, 17)
- C 150 days (waters prevail, Gen 7:24; Gen 8:3)
- Ḃ 40 days (Noah lifts the ark’s cover after landing on Ararat, Gen 8:6)
- Á 7 days (Noah dispatches a second dove, Gen 8:10, 12)⁵⁶

Moses reported an amazingly precise date.⁵⁷ He wrote, “In the six hundredth year of the life of Noah, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on this very day all of the springs of the great deep were broken open, and the windows of the heavens were opened.”

By including an exact date—which typically occurs in the Ancient Near East (ANE) only in the annals of kings—Moses imbued the account with historical credibility.⁵⁸ Using the Hebrew calendar based upon the lunar cycle, the total length of time Noah spent on the ark totals twelve months and eleven days (Gen 8:13–14).⁵⁹ However, a lunar year lasts eleven days less than the time it takes for the earth to completely orbit the sun. Based upon our reckoning, the flood lasted exactly one year.⁶⁰

Moses named two sources of flooding. A massive eruption occurred due to the land over a subterranean ocean bursting open, and a tremendous downpour fell from above.⁶¹ Both

⁴⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 291.

⁴⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 181.

⁴⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 288.

⁵⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 138.

⁵¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 289.

⁵²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 291.

⁵³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 177.

⁵⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 138.

⁵⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 179.

⁵⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 289–90.

⁵⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 179.

⁵⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 139.

⁵⁹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 7:11.

⁶⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 179.

⁶¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 291.

Gen 4–11 Chapter 7: God Opens the Heavens and the Earth (Gen 7:1–24) DT Plichta

“springs (*mayin*) of the great (*rav*) deep (*tehom*)” and “windows (*arubah*) of the heavens (*shamay*)” appear in other poetic biblical accounts (Ps 78:15–16; Mal 3:10).⁶² This portrayal of underground springs conforms to the ANE view of land sitting upon subterranean waters (Gen 2:10; Ps 24:1–2).⁶³

They gushed forth when God cleaved the springs open in a sudden explosion.⁶⁴ By releasing these waters, the Lord returned the earth to its original chaos (Gen 1:2).⁶⁵ Approximately 9,300 years ago, the Mediterranean broke through the Bosphorus into a shrinking freshwater lakebed, creating an enormous waterfall and deep erosion into one section of what is now the Black Sea. This resulted in cataclysmic flooding.⁶⁶

Just as we describe the “setting of the sun,” “the windows of the heavens were opened” does not depict scientific language.⁶⁷ The only other usage of the term “window of heaven” in the ANE occurs in an account of Baal erecting his home.⁶⁸ It says, “He opens a casement in the house, a window within the pa[lace]. Baal op[ens] *rifts in* [the cloud]s. Ba[al gives] forth his holy voice, Baal discharges the *ut[erance of his li]ps*. His h[oly] voice [convulses] the earth...the mountains quake.”⁶⁹

The language in Gen 7 regarding the two sources of water alludes to the imagery of Gen 1:6–7.⁷⁰ God was undoing his great act of separating the waters above from the waters below the earth.⁷¹ Israel’s prophets alluded to the reversal of creation as an act of judgment (Isa 24:17–21; Jer 4:23–26; Amos 7:4–6).⁷²

Moses’s original audience would have recalled this cosmic scene from Enuma Elish in which the god Marduk split the remains of the evil water goddess Tiamat:⁷³ “When the lord [Marduk] paused to view her dead body that he might divide the monster and do artful works. He split her like a shellfish into two parts: half of her he set up and ceiled it as sky, pulled down the bar and posted guards. He bade them to allow not her waters to escape.”⁷⁴

The flood which Noah experienced reversed the creation order. The waters above and below acted as the Lord commanded. By his word, God can control or release them (Isa 51:9–10; Ps 74:13–15).⁷⁵ Moses reported, “And the downpour [fell] on the earth forty days and forty nights.” Unlike the general word for rain (*matar*) in Gen 7:4, the term used here (*geshem*) refers to heavy showers or a deluge (Job 37:5–6; Ezra 10:9; Zech 10:1).⁷⁶ Torrential rains fell upon the earth.⁷⁷

⁶²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 181.

⁶³Walton, *Genesis*, 126.

⁶⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 292.

⁶⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 181.

⁶⁶Yanchilina et. al., “Compilation of Geophysical, Geochronological, and Geochemical Evidence Indicates a Rapid Mediterranean-Derived Submergence of the Black Sea’s Shelf and Subsequent Substantial Salinification in the Early Holocene,” *Marine Geology* 1, no. 383 (1 January 2017): 14–34, 32, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0025322716302961>.

⁶⁷Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 7:11.

⁶⁸Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 7:11.

⁶⁹Ginsberg, “Poems About Baal and Anath,” in *ANET*, 7:26–31, 135, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n159/mode/2up. Italics original.

⁷⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 291.

⁷¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 181.

⁷²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 139.

⁷³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 292.

⁷⁴Speiser, “Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic),” 4:135–40, 67, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n91/mode/2up.

⁷⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 293.

⁷⁶H. J. Zobel, “מָטָר” (*matar, geshem*), *TDOT* 8:250–65, 251.

⁷⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 293.

Gen 4–11 Chapter 7: God Opens the Heavens and the Earth (Gen 7:1–24) DT Plichta

However, Moses’s emphasis lies upon the salvation of those inside the ark, rather than upon those who did not seek refuge there.⁷⁸ He again described the entry of the passengers into the boat but with greater details, conferring a majestic tone to the account.⁷⁹ Just as with the logistics of building the ark, Moses omitted the specific aspects of this embarkation.⁸⁰

The text conveys that Noah and his family served as grand marshals of this parade, with various types of animals proceeding behind them.⁸¹ Disney’s decision to animate this scene to the tune of Elgar’s “Pomp and Circumstance” in *Fantasia 2000* seems fitting.⁸²

Moses wrote, “On that very same day, Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, and Noah’s wife, and the three wives of his sons with them entered the ark, them and all of the living things according to their kinds. And every animal according to its kind, and every creeping thing which creeps upon the earth according to its kind, and every bird according to its kind, every wing.” The phrase “on that very same day” signifies a memorable event (Gen 17:23; Exod 12:41; Deut 32:48–50).⁸³

That Moses mentioned Noah’s sons before his wife and cited none of the women by name reflects the patriarchal emphasis of ANE cultures.⁸⁴ Designating the younger women as “the three wives of his sons” indicates that they comprised a separate group within the family.⁸⁵ Evidently, none of the younger couples had produced children by this time.⁸⁶

Moses continued, “And they entered into the ark to Noah, two [by] two from all flesh in which [was] the breath of life. Those that went in, male and female of all flesh, entered as God commanded him.” Much like the Lord brought the animals to Adam to name them, so God led creatures to Noah to preserve them (Gen 2:19).⁸⁷

Earlier, the Lord had announced that he would “destroy all flesh in which was the breath of life” (Gen 6:17). Now, he exempted a remnant from imminent extermination.⁸⁸ In fact, God invisibly guided this great procession of male and female animals to protection.⁸⁹ Moses did not mention the seven pairs of clean creatures and birds here. However, everyone whom the Lord designated entered the ark (Gen 7:2–3, 16).⁹⁰

This section ends on a dramatic note, saying, “And the Lord shut him in.” God’s act of sealing Noah and those with him into the ark emphasizes divine protection (Job 38:8–11).⁹¹ While the storm raged around them, the one who shut them in guaranteed their safety.⁹²

Other ANE flood heroes had very different experiences.⁹³ In the Epic of Gilgamesh, Utnapishtim said, “I watched the appearance of the weather. The weather was awesome to behold. I boarded the ship and battened up the entrance.”⁹⁴ According to the Atrahasis Epic, “The appearance of the weather changed. [The god] Adad roared in the clouds. As soon as [Atrahasis] heard Adad’s voice, pitch was brought to him to close the door. After he had

⁷⁸Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, 126.

⁷⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 181.

⁸⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 293–4.

⁸¹Waltke, and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 138–9.

⁸²The video clip is available online.

⁸³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 139.

⁸⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 293.

⁸⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 182.

⁸⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 293.

⁸⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 139.

⁸⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 294.

⁸⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 182.

⁹⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 179.

⁹¹Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 226.

⁹²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 139.

⁹³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 139.

⁹⁴Speiser, “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” *ANET*, 11:91–3, 94,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n119/mode/2up.

bolted the door, Adad was roaring in the clouds. The winds became savage as he arose. He severed the mooring line and set the boat adrift.”⁹⁵ Unlike those great heroes, God’s favor saved Noah and his entourage (Gen 6:8).⁹⁶

Read Gen 7:5–16. What is the significance of Moses listing the exact date when the flood began? How was God reversing creation? Why is the fact that God shut the door important? How does that encourage you?

Not Knowing the Day or the Hour

2) Matt 24:36–39: During the time of Christ, Jewish scholars debated) whether they could predict the onset of the age to come.⁹⁷ While some asserted that no one could know,⁹⁸ the Pharisees believed the messiah would come to usher in the kingdom of God only when each of the Israelites kept themselves from sin.⁹⁹ Consequently, Jesus’s disregard for ritual purity on the Sabbath enraged them (Matt 12:1–2).

According to one early Jewish text, the Lord said, “Though I have set a limit to ‘the end,’ that it will happen in its time regardless of whether they will do repentance or not...the Messiah will come if they keep just one Sabbath, because the Sabbath is equivalent to all the law” (Shemot Rabbah 25:12; Yerushalmi, Ta’anit 1:10).¹⁰⁰

Yet, the *Babylonian Talmud* states:

“Our rabbis taught: ‘Seven things are hidden from men. These are they: the day of death, and the day of comfort, the [extent] of judgment; and a man does not know what is in his neighbor's heart; and a man does not know from what he will earn; and when the Davidic dynasty will return; and when the wicked kingdom will come to an end.’”¹⁰¹

Meanwhile, the Essenes of Qumran looked forward to the day when everyone would understand the meaning of the law and obey it perfectly. At that time, they believed the illegitimate high priests in power since the Maccabean Rebellion would be conquered and the rightful heir of David would emerge. They would join the messiah to overthrow demons and human enemies, ushering in God’s kingdom.¹⁰²

Earlier in this chapter, Christ discussed at length which signs do not indicate that he will return soon (Matt 24:1–28). Instead, they refer primarily to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.¹⁰³ However, he gave one exception, saying, “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to the whole inhabited world as a witness to the people groups, and then the end

⁹⁵Lambert and Millard, “Epic of Atra-Khasis,” *RANE*, 29.

⁹⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 182.

⁹⁷*Babylonian Talmud*, Sanhedrin 97a-99a, <http://halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Sanhedrin.pdf>.

⁹⁸Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 24:36.

⁹⁹Albrecht Oepke, “παρουσία” (*parousia*), *TDNT* 5:858–71, 864.

¹⁰⁰J. Immanuel Schochet, “Hastening the Coming of Mashiach,” note 5.

http://www.chabad.org/library/moshiach/article_cdo/aid/101681/jewish/Hastening-Mashiach.htm#footnote5a101681.

¹⁰¹*Babylonian Talmud*, Pesachim 54b, <http://halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Pesachim.pdf>.

¹⁰²Marius De Jonge, “Messiah.” *ABD* 4:777–88, 783.

¹⁰³Craig L. Blomberg, “Matthew,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 88.

shall come” (Matt 24:14).¹⁰⁴ Therefore, our proclamation of the gospel shall hasten the return of Christ. Also, failure to share Jesus with others will delay his coming (2 Pet 3:9).¹⁰⁵

Since Jesus returned to heaven (Acts 1:1–2, 9–11), the world has continually experienced evil and suffering. That fact has caused some believers throughout church history to speculate concerning an imminent return of Christ.¹⁰⁶ Every generation eagerly awaits the cosmic signs of the end of this age (Matt 24:29–31).¹⁰⁷

In response to the disciples’ question in Matt 24:1–3, Jesus finally gave a direct answer.¹⁰⁸ He said, “But concerning that day and hour, no one knows, not the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.” Frequently, the term “day” (*hēmera*) connotes the final judgment (Matt 7:21–23; Luke 10:12; 2 Tim 1:12).¹⁰⁹ However, in this instance, the sense of “day and hour” simply refers to an amount of time.¹¹⁰ Therefore, Christ asserted that we cannot determine the month or even the year of his return.¹¹¹

The Lord often keeps angels unaware of his plans. Despite their superhuman abilities, God limits their knowledge (1 Pet 1:10–12).¹¹² He restricts what they know and what they can do (Ps 91:11; Ps 103:19–21; Heb 1:5–7, 13–14).¹¹³ On the other hand, it is astounding that Jesus—the central figure on the day of his return—did not know when that will occur.¹¹⁴ Upon taking on flesh, Christ refused to utilize the attributes of God so he could fully experience humanity (Phil 2:5–7).¹¹⁵ While living on earth, Jesus often set aside his omniscience.¹¹⁶ He used his divine prerogatives only when the Father willed that he do so through the power of the Spirit (John 1:47–51; John 4:15–19).¹¹⁷

Before becoming human, the Son of God possessed all the characteristics of God,¹¹⁸ including his sovereign divine majesty (Phil 2:6–8).¹¹⁹ Christ was equal to the Father in cosmic authority while in his pre-incarnate state. Rather than conveying that “equality with God” was something Jesus desired which he did not have, such parity was always his.¹²⁰

The Greek term *perichoresis* best captures the essence of the Trinity: as in a perfectly choreographed dance, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit so interpenetrate one another that their wills are unified.¹²¹ Where there is one, so are the other two, without any one being greater than the others.¹²² As Augustine (354–430) stated, “Believe then that the Son is equal with the Father...For if he be not equal, he is not a true Son.”¹²³

¹⁰⁴Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission* (vol. 11 of *New Studies in Biblical Theology*; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 99.

¹⁰⁵Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 344.

¹⁰⁶Donald G. Bloesch, *The Last Things: Resurrection, Judgment, Glory* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 75.

¹⁰⁷Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 716.

¹⁰⁸Wilkins, *Matthew*, 799.

¹⁰⁹Gerhard von Rad and Gerhard Dellling, “ἡμέρα” (*hēmera*), *TDNT* 2:943–53, 952.

¹¹⁰Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “ώρα” (*hōra*), *BDAG* 1102–3, 1102.

¹¹¹Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 716.

¹¹²Wilkins, *Matthew*, 800.

¹¹³Erickson, *Christian Theology, 3rd Ed.*, 411.

¹¹⁴France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 939.

¹¹⁵Wilkins, *Matthew*, 800.

¹¹⁶Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 716.

¹¹⁷Wilkins, *Matthew*, 800.

¹¹⁸Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 114.

¹¹⁹Behm, “μορφή” (*morphē*), *TNDT* 4:751.

¹²⁰Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 207–8.

¹²¹Kevin Giles, *The Trinity and Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 113.

¹²²William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology, 3rd Ed.* (ed. Alan W. Gomes; Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003), 250.

¹²³Augustine, “Sermon 140,” in *Sermons (131–140) on Selected Lessons of the New Testament (NPNF2)* (ed. Philip Schaff; trans. R. G. MacMullen; Edinburgh: Eerdmans, 1867), 5.

Gen 4–11 Chapter 7: God Opens the Heavens and the Earth (Gen 7:1–24) DT Plichta

A review of Philip Schaff’s massive work *The Creeds of Christendom* reveals that the currently popular notion that Christ was subordinate to the Father by obeying him prior to his birth does not appear. In fact, those few creeds in which any mention of subordination appears vigorously condemned it.¹²⁴

Contrary to what one would expect of a sovereign Lord, Jesus did not regard his equality with God as a right to be utilized.¹²⁵ To become incarnate, the Son “emptied himself” of what would have prevented him from becoming fully human.¹²⁶ This involved divesting himself of his divine privileges and prestige.¹²⁷ However, the metaphor does not convey a loss of divine attributes. That he “emptied himself” poetically states that Christ poured himself out completely for the benefit of others, becoming poor that he might make many rich (2 Cor 8:9).¹²⁸ Although in every way equal to the Father and the Spirit, while Jesus lived on earth, he voluntarily divested himself of those rights (John 17:1–5, 20–26).¹²⁹

The world’s fastest sprinter joining you in a three-legged race provides a good analogy of the Incarnation. Jesus remained fully God but became functionally limited in his abilities while in his earthly body.¹³⁰ In Christ we see God living a fully human life,¹³¹ in addition to a person living in complete reliance upon the Father and the Spirit (John 11:40–44; Luke 4:1).¹³²

During Christ’s time on earth, the Father did not want him to know the date of his triumphant return.¹³³ However, in our era, Jesus sits upon his glorious throne (Acts 2:32–36; Acts 7:55–56; Rom 8:33–34). He shall be the one to judge all people (Matt 16:27; Matt 25:31–46; Phil 2:9–11).¹³⁴

After his resurrection, the disciples asked if Jesus would restore the kingdom of God at that time. He responded that the Father had determined when that would be. It was not for them “to know the time or period of time which the Father has set by his own authority” (Acts 1:6–7).¹³⁵ Notably, Christ did not say that he remained ignorant; only that we should.

Jesus then told three parables as illustrations. In the first, his return is completely unexpected, in the second, he comes back sooner than anticipated (Matt 24:45–51), and in the third, he arrives later than people predicted (Matt 25:1–13).¹³⁶ Since we cannot know the day of his return, we must remain ever vigilant.¹³⁷

a) Read Matt 24:36. Why didn’t Jesus know the time of his return? Do you think he does now? Why or why not?

¹²⁴Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, 3 Vols.* (rev David S. Schaff; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1931), <https://archive.org/stream/creedssofchriste01scha#page/n7/mode/2up>.

¹²⁵Werner Foerster, “αρπαγμος” (*harpagmos*), *TNDT* 1:473–4, 474.

¹²⁶Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 145.

¹²⁷Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “κενόω” (*kenoō*), *BDAG*, 539.

¹²⁸Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 117.

¹²⁹Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 115.

¹³⁰Erickson, *Christian Theology, 3rd Ed*, 670–1.

¹³¹Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 213.

¹³²Erickson, *Christian Theology, 3rd Ed.*, 658.

¹³³Wilkins, *Matthew*, 800.

¹³⁴France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 939.

¹³⁵Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 716.

¹³⁶Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 718.

¹³⁷Wilkins, *Matthew*, 800.

As in the Days of Noah

b) Matt 24:37–39: Jesus continued, explaining to his disciples, “For even as in the days of Noah, so shall be the coming (*parousia*) of the Son of Man.” Most people will ignore the signs and warnings of impending judgment. Yet—as with the flood—it shall affect everyone and everything on earth.¹³⁸

Parousia is a technical term for “the imminent coming of the exalted Lord in Messianic glory.”¹³⁹ Within the gospels, it occurs only in Matthew.¹⁴⁰ This appears to derive from Greek classical literature, with 255 occurrences. In contrast, *parousia* occurs only four times in the Greek Old Testament, all in apocryphal books (e.g. Judith 10:18; 2 Macc 8:12–13).¹⁴¹ Greco-Roman usage of “*parousia*” referred primarily to the arrival of a hidden deity who made its presence known by a revelation of power.¹⁴²

For example, Diodorus Siculus (first century BC) wrote: “After he had secured the throne, he instituted the initiatory rites of [the goddess] Demeter... transferring their ritual from Egypt. And the tradition that an *advent* of the goddess into Attica also took place at that time is reasonable, since it was then that the fruits which are named after her were brought to Athens, and this is why it was thought that the discovery of the seed had been made again, as though Demeter had bestowed the gift. And the Athenians on their part agree that it was...when a lack of rain had wiped out the crops, that Demeter came to them with the gift of grain.”¹⁴³

Eventually, “*parousia*” also could describe the visit of a high-ranking person, such as a king or emperor.¹⁴⁴ Polybius, a Roman historian (ca. 200–117 BC), recorded this event: “Cornelius with his colleagues went to king Philip. They met him near Tempe, and after speaking with him on the other matters about which they had instructions, they advised him to send an embassy to Rome, to ask for an alliance, in order to [deter] all suspicion of being...in expectation of the *arrival* of Antiochus.”¹⁴⁵

Since the time of Christ’s return remains unknown, many people will neglect to prepare.¹⁴⁶ Just as the flood overtook people who remained unaware of their peril, the Son of Man shall suddenly arrive without warning to render judgment (Dan 7:13–14).¹⁴⁷ In the days of Noah, only those who prepared in advance lived: everyone else died (Matt 25:1–13).¹⁴⁸

“For as it was in those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered into the ark.” The people of Noah’s era engaged in the normal activities of life.¹⁴⁹ Their affairs so consumed them that they failed to recognize spiritual realities.¹⁵⁰ Christ continued, “They did not understand until the flood came and swept them all away. In this manner shall be the coming of the Son of Man.”

¹³⁸France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 940.

¹³⁹Oepke, “παρουσία” (*parousia*), *TDNT* 5:858–71, 865.

¹⁴⁰Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 719.

¹⁴¹Result of Logos 7 word study on “παρουσία” (*parousia*).

¹⁴²Arndt, Danker and Bauer, “παρουσία” (*parousia*), *BDAG*, 780–1.

¹⁴³Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History*, 1.29.3, 96,

[Http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Diodorus_Siculus/1A*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Diodorus_Siculus/1A*.html).

¹⁴⁴Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “παρουσία” (*parousia*), *BDAG*, 780–1.

¹⁴⁵Polybius, *Histories* (trans. Evelyn S. Shuckburgh; London. New York: MacMillan, 1889), 18.48.4,

[Http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0234%3Abook%3D18%3Achapter%3D48](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0234%3Abook%3D18%3Achapter%3D48).

¹⁴⁶France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 940.

¹⁴⁷Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 591.

¹⁴⁸France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 940.

¹⁴⁹Osborne, *Matthew*, 904.

¹⁵⁰Wilkins, *Matthew*, 801.

Noah’s contemporaries lived in ignorance of their precarious state until judgment fell upon them.¹⁵¹ In the same way, spiritually unprepared people who live at the time of Christ’s return shall not escape (1 Thess 5:1–6).¹⁵²

Read Matt 24:37–39. How does the meaning of “*parousia*” affect the way you view Christ’s return? What made Noah and his contemporaries a particularly apt illustration? Why does this parable add a sense of urgency to your call to share the gospel?

One Will Be Left

c) **Matt 24:40–41:** Jesus continued to teach his disciples about the necessity of faithful living,¹⁵³ employing two illustrations based upon life in Israel.¹⁵⁴ The first parable says, “At that time, two men were in the field. One was taken (*paralambanō*) and one was left (*aphiēmi*). Two women were grinding grain with a hand mill. One was taken and one was left.”

Men routinely worked in a field and women ground grain, without any sense of threat.¹⁵⁵ In fact, women in small households considered milling flour a form of drudgery.¹⁵⁶ Families typically shared a courtyard and large grinding stones with their neighbors, who might have been relatives.¹⁵⁷ Just as a lit lamp indicated the presence of someone at home in the evening, so the sound of millstones revealed the presence of a woman (Jer 25:10–11; Rev 18:21–23). Grinding comprised a daily chore.¹⁵⁸

The Mishnah regulated this activity:

“One woman may lend to another who is suspected [not to observe properly the laws] of the Sabbatical year, a flour-sieve, a winnow, a handmill, and a stove, but she may not assist her to winnow or to grind. The wife of [one learned in, and observant of, the law] may lend to the wife of an unlearned person, a flour-sieve or a winnow, and may aid her to winnow, to grind, or to sift; but as soon as water is poured over the flour, she may not further assist her, for those who transgress the law are not to be aided in their transgressions (*m. Gittim* 5.9).

Women of varying religious commitments could grind grain together. In Jesus’s scenario, one of the two had prepared spiritually while the other had not. No middle ground exists (Matt 10:34–39).¹⁵⁹ At some future time, people will go about their daily routines when—without warning—God will take some while leaving others. This raises intriguing questions. What determines who the Lord takes?¹⁶⁰ Is being taken a good or a bad thing?

¹⁵¹Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 719.

¹⁵²Wilkins, *Matthew*, 801.

¹⁵³Blomberg, “Matthew,” In *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 88.

¹⁵⁴Wilkins, *Matthew*, 801.

¹⁵⁵France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 940.

¹⁵⁶Karel Van der Toorn, “Mill, Millstone,” *ABD* 4:831–2, 831.

¹⁵⁷Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 591.

¹⁵⁸Van der Toorn, “Mill, Millstone,” *ABD* 4:831.

¹⁵⁹Wilkins, *Matthew*, 801.

¹⁶⁰France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 941.

Paralambanō means “to take with oneself,” usually in close fellowship (Matt 2:13; Matt 17:1; John 14:3).¹⁶¹ On the other hand, it can have the nuance of “take into custody” or “remove forcibly” (John 19:17–18).¹⁶² Regarding the word “left” (*aphiēmi*), we can translate it as “to let go,” “to abandon,” “to divorce,” “to leave standing,” and even “to forgive” or “release from moral obligation” (Matt 4:11, 22; 1 Cor 7:12; Matt 5:23–24; Matt 12:32).¹⁶³ As a result, neither the context nor the meaning of this pair of verbs produces a conclusive answer. The answers hinge upon whether the verbs “swept away” (*airō*) (v. 39) and “taken away” (*paralambanō*) in Matt 24:39–40 have the same meaning.¹⁶⁴

Consequently, New Testament scholars remain divided regarding who will be taken and who will be left. Some assert that angels shall gather God’s people while leaving others on earth to face judgment (Matt 24:31).¹⁶⁵ They make a comparison with Noah and his family being gathered into the ark while those left outside perished.¹⁶⁶ Other experts note that the nineteenth century concept of believers being taken into heaven prior to judgment falling upon the earth rests upon shaky theological ground.¹⁶⁷ In fact, a recent survey of Protestant pastors has revealed that only one-third endorse a pre-tribulation rapture.¹⁶⁸

The crucial text for those who believe that Christians shall avoid the tribulation to come is 2 Thess 2:1–7. They view “the one who restrains” (*katechō*) in v. 7 as the Holy Spirit within believers, a notion which some prominent commentators deride.¹⁶⁹ Many scholars assert that Paul omitted the identity of the restrainer because the Christians in Thessalonica knew who it was.¹⁷⁰ Thus, any attempt to name that person or force consists of speculation.¹⁷¹ John Chrysostom (ca. 349–407) asserted, “If [Paul] meant to say the Spirit, he would not have spoken obscurely, but plainly.”¹⁷²

Other Scriptures teach that Christians who are still alive will rise to meet the Lord when he returns at the end of this age (Matt 24:27–31; 1 Cor 15:50–52; 2 Thess 1:3–10; 1 Pet 4:12–19).¹⁷³ All of creation eagerly anticipates that day (Rom 8:16–22).

Several usages of “*paralambanō*” in the Greek Old Testament also carry the nuance of being forcibly removed (Jer 49:2; Lam 3:2). Matthew chose this word to describe how the Roman soldiers took Jesus away to torture and mock him (Matt 27:27). Taking people away into judgment fits with the threat rendered by the Roman army when they destroyed the

¹⁶¹Gerhard Dellling, “*παραλαμβάνω*” (*paralambanō*), TDNT 4:11–14, 13.

¹⁶²Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “*παραλαμβάνω*” (*paralambanō*), BDAG, 767–8.

¹⁶³Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “*ἀφίημι*” (*aphiēmi*), 156–7.

¹⁶⁴Osborne, *Matthew*, 905.

¹⁶⁵Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 720.

¹⁶⁶Wilkins, *Matthew*, 801.

¹⁶⁷Erickson, *Christian Theology, 3rd Ed.*, 1094–5.

¹⁶⁸Bob Smietana, “Sorry, ‘Left Behind’: Only One-Third of Pastors Share Your End Times Theology,” *Christianity Today*, 26 April 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2016/april/sorry-left-behind-pastors-end-times-rapture-antichrist.html>.

¹⁶⁹F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 171.

¹⁷⁰Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 288.

¹⁷¹Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 256.

¹⁷²John Chrysostom, “Homily 4 on 2 Thessalonians,” in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon (NPNF1–13)* (ed. Philip Schaff; revisor John A. Broadus; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 388,

<https://archive.org/stream/homiliesofsjohnc14john#page/490/mode/2up>.

¹⁷³Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament, Rev. Ed.*, 610–1.

temple (Matt 24:15–22).¹⁷⁴ It also meshes with the flood taking the wicked away (Matt 24:39).¹⁷⁵

Finally, the parallel passage in Luke gives the impression that those left behind face judgment (Luke 17:34–37).¹⁷⁶ Earlier in Matthew’s gospel, Jesus delivered several parables about the judgment to come. The tale in Matt 13:24–30 and its interpretation in Matt 13:36–43 illustrate the destruction of the wicked, leaving the righteous behind. Once judgment day arrives, that separation shall be final (cf. Matt 13:47–50).¹⁷⁷

Read Matt 24:40–41. How do the two men in the field differ from each other? Why do you think Jesus chose activities like farming and grinding grain for this parable? Who do you think will be taken? Why?

Continually Watch!

d) Matt 24:42–44: Evoking the image of a night watchman,¹⁷⁸ Christ concluded his previous illustration and introduced the next one.¹⁷⁹ He said, “Therefore, continually watch, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming” (Matt 26:40–41).¹⁸⁰

Concerning such men, Josephus (37–100 AD) wrote this:

“Whatsoever it is which the king says or commands, it is done of necessity, and that without any delay, while he in the meantime is satiated with all sorts of food and pleasures, and sleeps in quiet. He is guarded by such as watch, and such as are...fixed down to the place through fear; for no one dares leave him, even when he is asleep, nor does anyone go away and take care of his own affairs; but he esteems this one thing the only work of necessity, to guard the king, and accordingly to this he wholly addicts himself.”¹⁸¹

This concept of watching requires preparation for Christ’s return, not merely looking forward to it. As the parables in Matt 24:45–25:46 indicate, we equip ourselves by behaving righteously in the various circumstances of life (1 Cor 16:13–14; 1 Pet 5:6–10).¹⁸²

In his second illustration, Jesus said, “But know this: if the owner of the house had known which time of night the thief was coming, he would have watched and not permitted him to dig into his house.”

Since burglary occurred commonly in Israel, this caught the disciples’ attention.¹⁸³ People typically built their homes from dried mud, so thieves could excavate through the walls or simply dig a hole from outside into the house (Matt 6:19–20).¹⁸⁴ Israelites considered

¹⁷⁴France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 941.

¹⁷⁵Wilkins, *Matthew*, 801. However, the verb used in Matt 24:39 for “swept them away” differs from that in v. 40.

¹⁷⁶Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 591–2.

¹⁷⁷France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 941.

¹⁷⁸Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 592.

¹⁷⁹Wilkins, *Matthew*, 802.

¹⁸⁰A present imperative in Greek denotes continuous or repetitive action.

¹⁸¹Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 11.3.4,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D11%3Awhiston+chapter%3D3%3Awhiston+section%3D4>.

¹⁸²Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 720.

¹⁸³Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 592.

¹⁸⁴Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 384.

a thief who broke in at night a dangerous threat. Therefore, a homeowner could kill such trespassers without retribution (Exod 22:2–3).¹⁸⁵

Some scholars attach no meaning to Jesus comparing himself to a sinister person. They stress only that his return will be sudden and unexpected.¹⁸⁶ Others note that Old Testament prophets frequently cited nocturnal thieves when pronouncing divine judgment (Jer 49:9–10; Obad 4–6; Joel 2:9–11).¹⁸⁷

An Aramaic paraphrase of Exod 12:42 names four important events which took place or would occur on the first night of Passover. These include creation (Gen 1–2), the Lord’s promise of descendants to Abraham (Gen 12:1–3; Gen 15:4–5), the inaugural ritual in Egypt (Exod 12:1–13), and the future arrival of the messiah.¹⁸⁸

This metaphor of Jesus coming like a thief made a strong impression upon the early church (2 Pet 3:10; Rev 3:1–3; Rev 16:15).¹⁸⁹ Its meaning is straightforward: if you knew someone planned to break into your home tonight, you would take precautions, such as remaining awake and on guard.¹⁹⁰ Like the homeowner, we must remain alert to the possibility of Christ returning soon.¹⁹¹ We have no idea when the time shall come.¹⁹² Therefore, we must always remain ready.¹⁹³

Christ concluded this illustration by saying, “For this reason, you also must be continually ready, because in an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.” No calculations or keeping track of signs can enable us to determine the date of Jesus’s return.¹⁹⁴ Therefore, we must continuously engage in spiritual communion with the Lord.¹⁹⁵ New Testament authors always linked their discussions of the end times with a call to ethical living. They never presented such theology merely to satisfy curiosity (Acts 1:6–11; 2 Thess 2:7–15; Rev 22:10–15).¹⁹⁶

Noah and his family could not have predicted the time of the flood when they first received the command to build the ark (Gen 6:13–14). Yet, when the time came, they had prepared enough to be ready in only seven days (Gen 7:1–5). Meanwhile, everyone else went on living normally. Just like Noah, we must always remain prepared for what we know will come.¹⁹⁷

An early Christian document called the Didache (50–120 AD) summarized the apostles’ teaching on this matter:

“Watch for your life’s sake. Let not your lamps be quenched, nor your loins unloosed; but be ready, for you know not the hour in which our Lord will come. But come together often, seeking the things which are befitting to your souls: for the whole time of your faith will not profit you if you are not made perfect in the last time.

“For in the last days false prophets and corrupters shall be multiplied, and the sheep shall be turned into wolves, and love shall be turned into hate; for when lawlessness increases, they shall hate and persecute and betray one another, and then shall appear the world-deceiver as

¹⁸⁵Keener, *IVPBCNT*, Matt 24:42–4.

¹⁸⁶Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 720.

¹⁸⁷Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 592.

¹⁸⁸Martin McNamara, *Targum and Testament Revisited: Aramaic Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible: A Light on the New Testament*, 2nd Ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 163.

¹⁸⁹France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 942.

¹⁹⁰Wilkins, *Matthew*, 802.

¹⁹¹Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 720.

¹⁹²France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 942–3.

¹⁹³Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 720.

¹⁹⁴France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 942–3.

¹⁹⁵Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 385.

¹⁹⁶Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 721.

¹⁹⁷France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 943.

Son of God, and shall do signs and wonders, and the earth shall be delivered into his hands, and he shall do iniquitous things which have never yet come to pass since the beginning. “Then shall the creation of men come into the fire of trial, and many shall be made to stumble and shall perish; but those who endure in their faith shall be saved from under the curse itself. And then shall appear the signs of the truth: first, the sign of an outspreading in heaven, then the sign of the sound of the trumpet. And third, the resurrection of the dead -- yet not of all, but as it is said: “The Lord shall come and all His saints with Him.” Then shall the world see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.”¹⁹⁸

Due to Jesus’s impending return, we must continually practice holiness as we await his appearing.

Read Matt 24:42–44. How will Jesus resemble a burglar breaking into a home at night? Why must we link our understanding of the end times with right living? Is there any value in predictions of when Christ shall return? Why or why not?

The Waters Prevail

3) Gen 7:17–20: This section begins the fifth scene of the flood narrative.¹⁹⁹ One commentator titles Gen 7:17–24 as The Triumphant Flood, for here the story reaches its peak.²⁰⁰ All the recorded action takes place outside of the ark,²⁰¹ rendering a depiction of eerie, silent desolation.²⁰² To enhance the mood, Moses employed repetition and often used words containing the letters m, b, and p to convey the impression of the ark rolling on the water.²⁰³

He began by writing, “And the flood came to pass, forty days upon the earth. And the waters increased, and it lifted the ark, and it was high over all the earth.” For emphasis, Moses repeated the duration of the flood and that the rainfall consisted of a deluge.²⁰⁴ He employed the same Hebrew word for the increase (*ravah*) of the waters that he reported the Lord had used to bless humans and animals that they might “multiply” (Gen 1:28) This gives us another hint that the flood reversed creation.²⁰⁵

Indeed, “The waters prevailed (*gabar*) and they increased exceedingly upon the earth.” “Prevailed” connotes having the upper hand due to greater strength than opposing forces (Exod 17:8–13; 1 Sam 2:9–10).²⁰⁶ Thus, the waters did not merely rise, they

¹⁹⁸Alexander Roberts, et al. (eds.), “The Didache: The Lord’s Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations,” in *Ante-Nicene Fathers. Volume 7: Lactantius, Venantius, Asterius, Victorinus, Dionysius, Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions, 2 Clement, Early Liturgies* (New York: Christian Literature, 1886), 382, <https://archive.org/stream/antenicenefather007robe#page/382/mode/2up>.

¹⁹⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 158.

²⁰⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 139.

²⁰¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 295.

²⁰²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 140.

²⁰³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 158.

²⁰⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 296.

²⁰⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 182.

²⁰⁶H. Kosmala, “גָּבַר” (*gabhar*), *TDOT* 2:367–382, 368.

Gen 4–11 Chapter 7: God Opens the Heavens and the Earth (Gen 7:1–24) DT Plichta

triumphed.²⁰⁷ Moses used a form of this military word four times to describe this flood.²⁰⁸ Chaotic waters which covered the earth at the beginning of God’s creative activity once again surged like hostile warriors, undoing the order which the Lord had put into place (Gen 1:1–2, 9–10).²⁰⁹

Despite this savage tempest, “The ark proceeded on the surface of the waters.”²¹⁰ As the waves crashed, the boat traveled over them.²¹¹ This sentence conveys a sense of peace and safety. God in his mercy had shut Noah and his fellow passengers inside and he would bring them safely through the storm without harm.²¹²

Moses wrote, “And the waters prevailed more and more exceedingly upon the earth, and all of the high mountains were covered which were under all of the heavens.” The sense of the Hebrew is hard to capture in English, as the beginning of the verse says, “prevailed exceedingly exceedingly upon the earth.” Hebrew authors often used repetition to express intensification,²¹³ yet the term which occurs twice in a row already describes escalation.

This tremendous flow of water did not merely submerge the land masses: Moses continued, “Fifteen cubits higher prevailed the waters, and they covered the mountains.” This amounts to approximately twenty-two feet of flooding above the tallest mountains. Since the height of the ark reached 45 feet, this should have enabled the submerged portion to pass over the peaks without running aground.²¹⁴

Years later, the powerful Akkadian ruler named Naram-Sin, who reigned from 2261–2224 BC, claimed, “I made the land of Akkad (look) like (after) the Deluge of water that happened at an early time of mankind.”²¹⁵ In addition to his claim of overwhelming destruction in his quest to enlarge his territory, he placed the flood at a time long before his own. This contradicts Ussher’s estimate that the flood occurred in 2349–2348 BC.²¹⁶

a) Read Gen 7:17–20. How did Moses communicate the vastness of this deluge? Based upon the text, what was the condition of the ark? What does this communicate about God’s ability to protect those he chooses to save from disaster?

The Breath of Life Extinguished

b) Gen 7:21–24: This passage describes the fulfillment of Gen 6:7, 17 and Gen 7:4. Moses wrote, “And all of flesh died: that which creeps on the earth, birds, and animals, and every living thing on all of the earth which swarm on the earth, and all of humanity.”

²⁰⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 182.

²⁰⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 296.

²⁰⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 140.

²¹⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 296.

²¹¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 182.

²¹²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 296.

²¹³Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 431–2,

<https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/430/mode/2up>.

²¹⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 140.

²¹⁵Gelb, et al, “Abubu,” in *CAD*, 1:77.,

https://oi.uchicago.edu/sites/oi.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/shared/docs/cad_a1.pdf.

²¹⁶James Ussher, *The Annals of the World* (London: Crook and Bedell, 1658), 6,

<https://archive.org/stream/AnnalsOfTheWorld/Annals#page/n15/mode/2up>.

Gen 4–11 Chapter 7: God Opens the Heavens and the Earth (Gen 7:1–24) DT Plichta

He listed each of these types of creatures in the order in which God created them, including people (Gen 1:20–26).²¹⁷ However, he omitted marine creatures, writing, “All flesh which [had] the breath of the spirit of life in its nostrils, all which [was] on dry ground, died. And he blotted out all that existed which was on the face of the earth, from humanity to animals to creeping things to birds of the heavens. And they were blotted out from the earth.”

Enuma Elish, a Babylon creation story, depicts the god Marduk using a storm to defeat the evil water goddess Tiamat. It says:

“In front of him he set the lightning, with a blazing flame he filled his body...The four winds he stationed that nothing of her might escape. The South Wind, the North Wind, the East Wind, the West Wind...He brought forth...‘the Evil Wind,’ the Whirl-wind, the Hurricane, the Fourfold Wind, the Sevenfold Wind, the Cyclone, the Matchless Wind. Then he sent forth the winds he had brought forth, the seven of them. To stir up the inside of Tiamat they rose up behind him. Then the lord raised up the flood-storm, his mighty weapon. He mounted the storm-chariot irresistible [and] terrifying.”²¹⁸ Consistent with the biblical text, people in the Ancient Near East (ANE) recognized floods as a means for the gods to destroy the wicked.

“However, Noah was left and those with him in the ark.” In contrast to the condemned ones who were blotted out (*makhah*), Noah and his passengers were left behind (*shāar*).²¹⁹ Both of these verbs occur in the passive tense,²²⁰ amplifying that the Lord controlled their fate (Cf. Gen 2:7).²²¹ The same waters which rendered divine judgment preserved a righteous remnant.²²² Noah was delivered, for God chose him. His family was saved due to their relationship with the Lord.²²³

Jewish scholars recognized Noah as the supreme example of a righteous remnant whom God preserved while everyone else faced judgment.²²⁴ For example, a second century BC text states, “Noah was found perfect and righteous; in the time of wrath he was taken in exchange; therefore a remnant was left to the earth when the flood came. Everlasting covenants were made with him that all flesh should not be blotted out by a flood” (Sirach 44:17–18, RSVCE).

This chapter in Genesis concludes by saying, “The waters prevailed upon the earth [for] 150 days.” The planet reverted to the form which existed when the waters of the great deep covered everything (Gen 1:1–2, 9).²²⁵ By the time the waters receded, Noah and his fellow passengers would spend one year on the ark.²²⁶ No other ANE flood account mentions the duration of the deluge.²²⁷

Read Gen 7:21–24. What is the significance of the order Moses chose to list who perished? Who survived? How does this text indicate that the Lord reversed what he had created? Does this passage encourage or discourage you? Why?

²¹⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 183.

²¹⁸Speiser, trans., “Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic),” in *ANET*, 4:39–50, 66, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n91/mode/2up.

²¹⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 297.

²²⁰Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “מָחָה” (*makhah*), *BDB*, 562, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/562/mode/2up>. This verb appears twice in this verse: first in an active form; then, passive.

²²¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 297.

²²²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 140.

²²³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 298.

²²⁴R. E. Clements, “שָׂאָר” (*shaar*), *TDOT* 14:272–86, 276.

²²⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 183.

²²⁶Walton, *Genesis*, 314.

²²⁷Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 425.

Faithful and True

4) **Rev 19:11:** Noah’s generation came to an end due to an act of God’s judgment. Those living when Christ returns will undergo a similar experience (Rev 19:11–21). Esoteric symbolism and exhortation characterize apocalyptic (end-times) literature.²²⁸ Nevertheless, the metaphors in the Apostle John’s vision portray actual events.²²⁹

In Rev 19:12–16, John reported his vision in the form of a chiasm, with the central focus falling upon the armies of heaven clothed in white linen.²³⁰ Verse 11 says, “And I saw heaven had been opened, and behold, a white horse. And the one sitting on it [is] faithful and true, and in righteousness he judges and wages war.”

The first phrase indicates that John was reporting a new vision which he received.²³¹ That heaven had been opened not only announces new divine revelation (Mark 1:9–11; John 1:51; Acts 7:55–56),²³² it can portend judgment (Ezek 1:1; Ezek 2:1–4; Rev 4:1, 5; Rev 11:19; Rev 15:5–8).²³³ This imagery mirrors Jewish interpretations that the messiah would come as a great warrior.²³⁴

For example, a second century BC apocryphal book written from the perspective of the patriarch Levi expands upon Gen 34:1–7, 25–27. This work links the opening of the gates of heaven and judgment upon the wicked. It states:

“Know therefore, know that the Lord shall execute judgement upon the sons of men...They that bless Him shall be blessed, and they that curse Him shall perish. And thereupon the angel *opened to me the gates of heaven*, and I saw the holy temple, and upon a throne of glory the Most High... Then the angel brought me down to the earth, and gave me a shield and a sword, and said to me, ‘Execute vengeance on Shechem because of Dinah, thy sister, and I will be with thee because the Lord hath sent me.’ And I destroyed at that time the sons of Hamor, as it is written in the heavenly tables.”²³⁵

Greco-Roman authors also associated the opening of heaven with divine revelation and doom.²³⁶ According to Virgil (70–19 BC):

“While thus in distant region moves the war...Saturn’s daughter sends celestial Iris...And thus [she]...called with lips of rose, ‘Behold, Aeneas...has left behind the city with his fleet and followers...Call for thy chariot and steeds! Away! Take yonder tents by terror and surprise!’ She spoke; and heavenward on poising wings soared, cleaving as she fled from cloud to cloud a vast, resplendent bow. The warrior saw, and, lifting both his hands, pursued with prayer the fading glory, ‘Beauteous Iris, hail!...Such solemn sign I shall obey.’”²³⁷ John’s original audience recognized the motif of judgment occurring when the heavens opened.

Through the opened heavens, John saw a white steed and its rider. White represents both purity and vindication in the book of Revelation (Rev 3:3–5; Rev 6:9–11).²³⁸ Greco-

²²⁸Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral, 2nd Ed.* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 278.

²²⁹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 351, note 1.

²³⁰Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 956.

²³¹Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 949.

²³²David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 1052.

²³³Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 949.

²³⁴Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 351.

²³⁵Rutherford H. Jr. Platt, “Testament of Levi,” in *The Forgotten Books of Eden* (New York: Alpha Place, 1926), 2:1–12, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/fbe/fbe273.htm>.

²³⁶Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1052.

²³⁷Virgil, *Aeneid* (trans. Theodore C. Williams; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1910), 9:1–21.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0054%3Abook%3D9%3Acard%3D25>.

²³⁸Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 950.

Gen 4–11 Chapter 7: God Opens the Heavens and the Earth (Gen 7:1–24) DT Plichta

Romans considered white steeds the most prized, appropriate for high-ranking officials and conquering kings.²³⁹

The historian Suetonius (ca. 69–130 AD) noted the elevation of Domitian's (51–96 AD) status after an initial debasement. He wrote:

“He likewise designed an expedition into Gaul and Germany, without the least necessity for it, and contrary to the advice of all his father's friends; and this he did only with the view of equalling his brother in military achievements and glory. But for this he was severely reprimanded, and that he might the more effectually be reminded of his age and position, was made to live with his father, and his litter had to follow his father's and brother's carriage, as often as they went abroad; but he attended them in their triumph for the conquest of Judaea, mounted on a white horse.”²⁴⁰

Furthermore, Greco-Romans believed in the existence of supernatural, immortal steeds which traveled between heaven and the earth.²⁴¹ Ovid (43 BC–17 AD) wrote this in praise of the sun god's horses, saying, “The dark-night pastures of Apollo's steeds are hid below the western skies; when there, and spent with toil, in lieu of nibbling herbs they take ambrosial food: it gives their limbs restoring strength and nourishes anew...his winged steeds.”²⁴²

In Revelation, this appearance of a rider on a white horse represents the return of Christ, the long-awaited second coming (*parousia*).²⁴³ If a Roman king on a white steed imparted fear, how much more should the conquering Lord of heaven.²⁴⁴

The first of four titles borne by Christ in this account of his return is “Faithful (*pistos*) and True (*alēthinos*)” (Cf. Rev 3:14).²⁴⁵ In extra-biblical Greek, this name appears only in 3 Macc 2:11, where the high priest petitioned the Lord to defend his honor by overthrowing a profane tyrant:²⁴⁶

“And because you love the house of Israel, you promised that if we should have reverses, and tribulation should overtake us, you would listen to our petition when we come to this place and pray. And indeed you are faithful and true. In our downfall this audacious and profane man undertakes to violate the holy place on earth dedicated to your glorious name...Speedily let your mercies overtake us, and put praises in the mouth of those who are downcast and broken in spirit, and give us peace” (3 Macc 2:10–20, RSV).

These attributes also describe the credibility of the words spoken in the book of Revelation (Rev 21:5–6; Rev 22:6).²⁴⁷ In the Old Testament, the name “faithful and true” appears only once, applying to God as a witness (Jer 42:5). However, the men who appealed to God failed to do what they promised, bringing judgment on themselves (Jer 42:20–22).²⁴⁸

Removing any doubt about the intention of the rider upon the white steed, John wrote, “And in righteousness he judges and wages war.” The book of Revelation repeatedly reinforces the justness of divine judgment (e.g. Rev 16:5–7; Rev 19:2).²⁴⁹ At last the

²³⁹Keener, *Revelation*, 453.

²⁴⁰C. Tranquillus Suetonius, “Domitian,” Pages 500–25 in *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars* (trans. Alexander Thompson; Philadelphia: Gebbie, 1883), 501.
<https://archive.org/stream/livesoftwelvecsa00suet/page/n557/mode/2up>.

²⁴¹Keener, *Revelation*, 456.

²⁴²Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (trans. Brookes More; Boston: Cornhill, 1922), 4:214–6, 262,
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0028%3Abook%3D4%3Acard%3D167>.

²⁴³Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1053.

²⁴⁴Keener, *Revelation*, 453.

²⁴⁵Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 352.

²⁴⁶Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 950.

²⁴⁷Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1053.

²⁴⁸Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 951.

²⁴⁹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 352.

Gen 4–11 Chapter 7: God Opens the Heavens and the Earth (Gen 7:1–24) DT Plichta

followers of the beast will receive the answer to their question (Rev 13:4).²⁵⁰ Judging with righteousness involves not only destroying God’s enemies but also saving his people (Ps 9:7–10; Ps 96:7–13; Isa 11:1–5).²⁵¹

By the first century BC, Jewish people expected the messiah to judge the nations in one final conflict.²⁵²

“Behold, O Lord, and raise up unto them their king, the son of David...that he may reign over Israel Thy servant. And gird him with strength, that he may shatter unrighteous rulers, and that he may purge Jerusalem from nations that trample (her) down to destruction...At his rebuke nations shall flee before him, and he shall reprove sinners for the thoughts of their heart. And he shall gather together a holy people, whom he shall lead in righteousness...And he shall not suffer unrighteousness to lodge any more in their midst, nor shall there dwell with them any man that knoweth wickedness, for he shall know them, that they are all sons of their God.”²⁵³ John identified this messiah as Jesus (Rev 1:12–18).

Righteous judgment characterizes the Lord’s actions (2 Tim 4:7–8; 1 Pet 2:21–25). Therefore, he expected Israel’s judges, for her kings, and even individuals to judge justly (Deut 1:16–17; Deut 16:18–20; Prov 31:1, 9; Zech 7:8–10). Jesus demanded that the people of God apply the same principles (John 7:24).²⁵⁴

a) Read Rev 19:11. Why is it significant that heaven had been opened? What did someone riding upon a white horse symbolize? How does knowing that Jesus will judge justly make you feel?

Ruler of All Nations

b) Rev 19:12–13: John began his description of the one riding the white horse in Rev 19:11 by writing, “And his eyes [are] a flame of fire.”²⁵⁵ This depiction confirms Jesus’s deity and reveals his fury (Dan 10:4–9; Rev 1:12–18; Rev 2:18–23).²⁵⁶ As the divine judge,²⁵⁷ nothing can hide from his sight.²⁵⁸ He will unmask even those who falsely claim him as their Lord.²⁵⁹

In addition, John wrote, “On his head [are] many crowns.” Within the ancient world, an emperor wore one diadem to represent each city or nation he ruled.²⁶⁰ For example, the ring of Ptolemy VI Philometer (ca. 186–145 BC) shows him wearing the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt.²⁶¹ While conquering Syria, “Ptolemy entered Antioch and put on

²⁵⁰Keener, *Revelation*, 452.

²⁵¹Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 950–1.

²⁵²Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 351.

²⁵³G. Buchanan Gray, trans., “The Psalms of Solomon,” in *APOT* (ed. R. H. Charles; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 17:21–22, 25–27. <http://www.goodnewsinc.net/othbooks/psalmsol.html>.

²⁵⁴Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1053.

²⁵⁵Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 353.

²⁵⁶Keener, *Revelation*, 453.

²⁵⁷Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 951.

²⁵⁸Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 353.

²⁵⁹Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 951.

²⁶⁰Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1054.

²⁶¹Wikimedia Commons, “File: Ring with Engraved Portrait of Ptolemy VI Philometor (3rd–2nd Century BCE).”

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ring_with_engraved_portrait_of_Ptolemy_VI_Philometor_\(3rd-2nd_century_BCE\)_-_20080315.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ring_with_engraved_portrait_of_Ptolemy_VI_Philometor_(3rd-2nd_century_BCE)_-_20080315.jpg).

Gen 4–11 Chapter 7: God Opens the Heavens and the Earth (Gen 7:1–24) DT Plichta

the crown of Asia. Thus, he put two crowns on his head, the crown of Egypt and that of Asia” (1 Macc 11:13, NRSVCE). For Greco-Romans, this symbolized a major victory.²⁶²

Consequently, John’s original readers understood that this vision of Christ wearing many crowns signified that he rules over all dominions (Rev 1:5; Rev 19:6),²⁶³ and that all authority belongs to him.²⁶⁴ This portends a cosmic battle with the dragon and the beast (Rev 12:3; Rev 13:1). In contrast, the crowns which Jesus’s followers shall wear symbolize our identification with Christ (Rev 2:10; Rev 3:10–11; Rev 4:4).²⁶⁵

John also described the rider as, “having a name which has been written which no one has known except himself.” Earlier in Revelation, Jesus made a similar vow to victorious believers (Rev 2:17; Rev 3:12).²⁶⁶ This concept of receiving a new name reflects promises made in the Old Testament (Isa 62:2–4, Isa 65:15). That Jesus’s name remained unknown in John’s vision indicates that Isaiah’s prophecies of a marriage relationship with Christ had not yet come to fruition.²⁶⁷ Someday, it shall be known to all of God’s people.²⁶⁸

This title may be inscribed directly on Jesus.²⁶⁹ However, given the context, Christ’s secret name likely appears on the diadems which he wore (Rev 13:1).²⁷⁰ The high priest bore the name of Yahweh on a gold plate placed upon his turban (Exod 28:36–38). Furthermore, in the age to come, the people of God shall have the names of the Father and the Son inscribed on our foreheads (Rev 14:1; Rev 22:3–4).²⁷¹

In the ancient world, people believed that knowing the name of a god or demon enabled a person to exert power over it.²⁷² This spell appears in a Greek magic text: “You master Typhon, you who I call, who are the dreaded sovereign o’er the firmament. You who are fearful, awesome, threatening. You who’re obscure and irresistible and hater of the wicked, you I call, Typhon...I invoke you in prayer, I call, almighty one, that you perform for me whate’er I ask of you, and that you nod assent at once to me and grant that what I ask be mine...for I speak your true names.”²⁷³

Plato (427–347 BC) reported that Socrates (469–399 BC) said, “We, if we are sensible, must recognize that...of the gods we know nothing, neither of them nor of their names, whatever they may be, by which they call themselves, for it is clear that they use the true names.”²⁷⁴

This concept may explain why divine visitors in the Old Testament (OT) refused to identify themselves (Gen 32:24–29; Judg 13:17–18).²⁷⁵ A

²⁶²Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1054.

²⁶³Keener, *Revelation*, 453.

²⁶⁴Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 353.

²⁶⁵Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 952–3.

²⁶⁶Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1055.

²⁶⁷Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 953.

²⁶⁸G. K. Beale and Sean M. McDonough, “Revelation,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 1143.

²⁶⁹Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1055.

²⁷⁰Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 955.

²⁷¹Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 955.

²⁷²Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 353.

²⁷³Hans Dieter Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells, 2nd Ed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 4:264–80, 43,

https://fewarethemystaidotcom.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/hans_dieter_betz__greek_magical_papyri_in_trans_labookos-org.pdf. Italics mine.

²⁷⁴Plato, “Cratylus,” in *Plato in Twelve Volumes* (trans. Harold N. Fowler; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921), 400d,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0172%3Atext%3DCrat.%3Asection%3D400d>.

²⁷⁵Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 353.

Jewish apocryphal text, which was augmented in the Christian era (2nd century BC–4th century AD), depicts Isaiah’s purported experience:²⁷⁶

“And [the angel] took me into the air of the seventh heaven, and moreover I heard a voice saying, ‘How far will he ascend that dwelleth in the flesh?’ And I feared and trembled...And when I trembled, behold, I heard from hence another voice being sent forth, and saying, ‘It is permitted to the holy Isaiah to ascend hither; for here is his garment.’

“And I asked the angel who was with me and said, “Who is he who...permitted me to ascend?” And he said unto me...“He who permitted thee, this is thy Lord God, the Lord Christ, who will be called “Jesus” in the world, but *His name thou canst not hear till thou hast ascended out of thy body.*”²⁷⁷

Since no one currently knows Jesus’s secret name, he remains sovereign over everyone. Medieval Jewish scholars believed that after the events of Ps 9:3–8 occur, then Ps 9:9–10 shall be fulfilled. One document states that the Lord will “renew in the time-to-come...the name of the Messiah” ((Pesikta Rabbati 12.9). Another text notes that after he destroys evil people, “the name of God will be complete” (Pesikta de Rab Kahana 3.16).²⁷⁸

As John’s vision concerns the future, Christ’s unknown name will not remain a secret forever. Many people will learn the meaning of that name in terms of justice and vengeance. Yet for all who enter a close relationship with him, Jesus’s secret name will speak of grace and salvation (Eph 1:3–11).²⁷⁹

John further described the rider, writing, “And he has put on a garment having been dipped in blood.” This depicted a heavenly warrior covered with the blood of those he has slain, not a metaphor for Christ’s atoning blood.²⁸⁰ Although the battle had not yet begun, the messiah’s bloodstained clothing represented certain victory.²⁸¹ Justice rendered to God’s enemies shall usher in the fullness of his kingdom.²⁸²

Early Hebrew poetry depicts the Lord as a divine warrior (Exod 15:1–10; Deut 33:26–29; Judg 5:4–5, 19–23). This image intensifies in the prophetic books (Isa 42:13; Isa 59:14–20; Hab 3:11–15).²⁸³ Many New Testament (NT) scholars recognize that the language of Rev 19 closely adheres to Isa 63:1–6.²⁸⁴ In the end, everyone will know that the holy warrior is Jesus (Cf. Isa 41:21–25; Phil 2:9–11).²⁸⁵

This OT passage confirms that the blood spattered upon his clothing will come from the enemies of God.²⁸⁶ Thus, Christ shall exact justice for his people through both vengeance and redemption.²⁸⁷ As the rest of this chapter in Revelation clarifies, the blood flowing from the wine press in Isaiah represents all living in rebellion against God (cf. Rev 14:18–20).²⁸⁸

A very interesting parallel to Rev 19:13 appears in an Aramaic paraphrase of Gen 49:11, a text which precedes the Christian era.²⁸⁹ The Jerusalem Targum states: “How beautiful is the King [Messiah], who is to arise from the house of [Judah]! Binding his loins and going forth to war against them that hate him, he will slay kings with princes,

²⁷⁶Peter Kirby, “Ascension of Isaiah.”

²⁷⁷R. H. Charles, trans., “The Ascension of Isaiah,” in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 9:1–5, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/ascension.html>. Italics mine.

²⁷⁸Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 954.

²⁷⁹Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 954–7.

²⁸⁰Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1057.

²⁸¹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 354.

²⁸²Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 958.

²⁸³Theodore Hiebert, “Warrior, Divine.,” *ABD* 6:876–80, 876.

²⁸⁴Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1143.

²⁸⁵Keener, *Revelation*, 453–4.

²⁸⁶Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 353.

²⁸⁷Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1143.

²⁸⁸Keener, *Revelation*, 454.

²⁸⁹Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament, 2nd Ed.*, 82.

and make the rivers red with the blood of their slain, and his hills white with the fat of their mighty ones; *his garments will be dipped in blood*, and he himself be like the juice of the wine press.”²⁹⁰

This image of a heavenly warrior with bloody clothing would also have frightened Greco-Roman readers.²⁹¹ By the time of Christ, Roman field commanders wore red garments into battle.²⁹²

Ovid (43 BC–17 AD) portrayed an angry goddess this way: “[She], revengeful, takes a torch;—*besmeared with blood, and vested in a robe, dripping with crimson gore*, and twisting-snakes engirdled, she departs her dire abode—with twitching Madness, Terror, Fear and Woe: and when she had arrived at the destined house, the door-posts shrank from her, the maple doors turned ashen grey: the Sun amazed fled...but suddenly that baneful Fury stood across the way, blocking the passage.”²⁹³

Similarly, Christ shall render justice upon the earth,²⁹⁴ covered by the blood of his enemies.

John then revealed another pseudonym for this warrior, writing, “And his name [is] the Word of God.” Since the only other place in the NT where this title appears is in John’s gospel (John 1:1),²⁹⁵ this title provides another hint that the mysterious rider is Jesus.

While the Word of God came to inaugurate the kingdom of God at his first coming, at his return he shall usher in the age to come in all its fullness. By his authoritative declaration, he shall destroy everyone who rebels against him.²⁹⁶

According to a Jewish apocryphal book:

“For while gentle silence enveloped all things, and night in its swift course was now half gone, *your all-powerful word* leaped from heaven, from the royal throne, into the midst of the land that was doomed, a stern warrior carrying the *sharp sword of your authentic command*, and stood and filled all things with death, and touched heaven while standing on the earth (Wisdom 18:14–16, NRSV).²⁹⁷

Read Rev 19:12–13. Why are Jesus’s eyes described as “a flame of fire”? How does wearing many crowns signify his sovereignty? What importance would the original audience have attached to Christ having a secret name? Why shall he return? Whose blood will stain Christ’s clothing? Does this passage elicit encouragement or dread in you? Why?

²⁹⁰C. W. H. Pauli, “Comparison of Pentateuch: Jewish Publication Society 1917 Targums Onkelos, Jonathan Ben Uzziel/Palestinian, Jerusalem Fragments,” Gen 49:11, <http://juchre.org/targums/comp/gen49.htm>. Italics mine.

²⁹¹Keener, *Revelation*, 453.

²⁹²Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1057.

²⁹³Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (trans. Brookes More; Boston: Cornhill, 1922), 4:481–2, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0028%3Abook%3D4%3Acard%3D481>.

²⁹⁴Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1143.

²⁹⁵Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1058.

²⁹⁶Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 354.

²⁹⁷Italics mine.

The Armies in Heaven

c) **Rev 19:14:** In Rev 19:11–21, John frequently shifted verb tenses between the present, the future, and the past. This is in keeping with his report of a vision he had already seen concerning realities yet to come.²⁹⁸

Since Rev 19:11–16 forms a chiasm,²⁹⁹ the central focus of the entire passage falls upon v. 14. It says, “And the armies in heaven were following him on white horses, having been clothed in pure white linen.” These military forces mounted steeds like that of their commander (Rev 19:11).³⁰⁰

Much debate revolves around who comprises these armies. In the Old Testament, the armies of heaven appear to be angels, typically borne by chariots (Josh 5:13–15; Ps 68:17; 2 Ki 6:15–17).³⁰¹ Earlier, John described a battle between the angel Michael and his troops against Satan and his forces (Rev 12:7–9).³⁰² Elsewhere in the New Testament, angels assist Christ in rendering final judgment (Mark 8:38; Matt 13:40–42; Matt 16:27).³⁰³

However, Ps 149 indicates that God’s people shall participate in executing judgment.³⁰⁴ A parallel passage in Revelation calls those fighting on Christ’s side “called and chosen and faithful” (Rev 17:14).³⁰⁵ Since John described the people numbered among the 144,000 as ones “who follow the Lamb wherever he goes,” some scholars suggest that they belong within the armies of God (Rev 14:1–4).³⁰⁶

Early Christians held that deceased believers joined the angels in these armies.³⁰⁷ For example, the Didache (ca. 100 AD) teaches that, “The Lord shall come and all His saints with Him. Then shall the world see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.”³⁰⁸

The Jewish/Christian hybrid Ascension of Isaiah (ca. 150–200 AD) reports: “The Lord will come with His angels and with the armies of the holy ones from the seventh heaven with the glory of the seventh heaven, and He will drag Beliar (the devil) into Gehenna and also his armies...*The saints will come with the Lord with their garments which are (now) stored up on high in the seventh heaven: with the Lord they will come, whose spirits are clothed, they will descend and be present in the world.*”³⁰⁹

However, these armies will not engage the enemy in battle.³¹⁰ Instead, they provide testimony against oppressors for their unbelief (Matt 12:38–42).³¹¹ As a result of our union with Christ, we triumph through identification with our Lord (Rev 2:25–29).³¹² Christ alone shall conquer the beast and his followers on behalf of those who accompany him (Rev 19:19–21).³¹³

²⁹⁸Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 961.

²⁹⁹Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 956.

³⁰⁰Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 354.

³⁰¹Keener, *IVPBCNT*, Rev 19:14.

³⁰²Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1059.

³⁰³Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1143.

³⁰⁴Keener, *IVPBCNT*, Rev 19:14.

³⁰⁵Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 354.

³⁰⁶Keener, *Revelation*, 454.

³⁰⁷Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1059–60.

³⁰⁸Roberts, et al. (eds.), “The Didache: The Lord’s Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations,” 16:7, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-roberts.html>.

³⁰⁹Charles, trans., “The Ascension of Isaiah,” 4:14–16,

<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/ascension.html>. Italics mine.

³¹⁰Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 354–5.

³¹¹Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 960.

³¹²Bradley G. Green, *Covenant and Commandment: Works, Obedience, and Faithfulness in the Christian Life* (ed. D. A. Carson; New Studies in Biblical Theology; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 158.

³¹³Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1143.

The color of the horses and their pure white raiment reflects the holiness of Christ's armies (Rev 15:5–6; Rev 19:7–9).³¹⁴ In the case of believers, this serves as proof of our vindication resulting from Jesus's sacrificial death (1 Cor 1:30–31; 2 Cor 5:21; Col 2:13–15), as well as for standing firm to the end (Rev 6:9–11; Rev 7:9–10, 13–17).³¹⁵

Read Rev 19:14. Who do you think will be included in the armies of God? What is their purpose? Why will they be clothed in white and riding on white horses? How does God see you?

Striking the Nations

d) Rev 19:15: In this verse, John returned to his vision of the victorious Christ (Rev 19:11–13). He wrote, “And from his mouth comes a sharp sword, in order that with it he might strike the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron, and he treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God Almighty.”

The apostle incorporated allegorical elements,³¹⁶ with four clear allusions to the Old Testament (OT).³¹⁷ First, the returning messiah shall have a sharp sword protruding from his mouth (Rev 1:16–17). This refers to the lethal power of his pronouncements, rather than to a physical weapon (Isa 11:4; Hos 6:4–6; Rev 2:14–16; Heb 4:12).³¹⁸ That Christ shall strike the nations alludes to Ps 2.³¹⁹ Ungodly rulers and nations who seek to overthrow the authority of the Lord will fail (2 Thess 2:8–10).³²⁰

A Jewish apocryphal book (ca. 90–100 AD) fits the scenario of Rev 19 quite well: “I dreamed a dream in the night...and I looked and [saw] the figure of a man come up out of the heart of the sea. And I looked, and behold, that man flew with the clouds of heaven; and wherever he turned his face to look, everything under his gaze trembled, and whenever his voice issued from his mouth, all who heard his voice melted as wax melts when it feels the fire.

“After this I looked, and behold, an innumerable multitude of men were gathered together from the four winds of heaven to make war against the man who came up out of the sea...and behold, when he saw the onrush of the approaching multitude, he neither lifted his hand nor held a spear or any weapon of war; but I saw only how he sent forth from his mouth as it were a stream of fire, and from his lips a flaming breath, and from his tongue he shot forth a storm of sparks. All these were mingled together, the stream of fire and the flaming breath and the great storm and fell on the onrushing multitude which was prepared to fight, and burned them all up, so that suddenly nothing was seen of the innumerable multitude but only the dust of ashes and the smell of smoke....

“After this I saw the same man...call to him another multitude which was peaceable. Then many people came to him, some of whom were joyful and some sorrowful; some of them

³¹⁴Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1060.

³¹⁵Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 960.

³¹⁶Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1058.

³¹⁷Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 961.

³¹⁸Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 355.

³¹⁹Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1060.

³²⁰Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 961.

were bound, and some were bringing others as offerings. Then in great fear I awoke” (4 Erza 13:1–13, RSV). The sword in John’s vision serves as a metaphor for the final judgment awaiting the wicked.³²¹

“He shall rule them with a rod of iron” alludes to the Greek translation of Ps 2:9.³²² The word translated as “shall rule” (*poimainō*) typically means “shall shepherd.”³²³ Adding to the confusion, the Hebrew verb used in that psalm means “break” (*rāa*)³²⁴ However, that makes sense due to the parallelism of the second half of the verse regarding a wine press. Thus, it appears that John chose to use the rod of iron as a symbol of destruction for Christ’s enemies but of protection for his people (Jer 23:1–6; Ezek 34:1–4, 15–6; Ps 23:1–4).³²⁵

A first century BC Jewish apocryphal book pulls these nuances together, saying of the messiah, “Righteously he shall thrust out sinners from (the) inheritance. He shall destroy the pride of the sinner as a potter’s vessel. With a rod of iron, he shall break in pieces all their substance. He shall destroy the godless nations with the word of his mouth.”³²⁶

The third metaphor John used to describe the actions of the messiah asserts, “He treads the wine press of the fierce anger of God Almighty.” Here the apostle combined the images of the cup of God’s anger and of treading upon a wine press (Cf. Rev 14:9–10, 14–20).³²⁷ Treading grapes by throwing them into a vat with a spout at the bottom consisted of a familiar symbol of divine wrath to the original audience (Joel 3:12–13; Lam 1:15).³²⁸

However, the closest OT parallel occurs in Isa 63:1–6.³²⁹ In that passage, God announced the destruction of Edom, the nation which descended from Jacob’s brother Esau (Gen 25:30).

In the Aramaic paraphrase called Targum Jonathan, the field of destruction widens:³³⁰ “Wherefore are the mountains red from the blood of the slain? Yea, the valleys shall flow as the wine from the wine press. Behold, as the grapes are trodden in the vat, thus He shall increase the slaughter in the camps of the nations; they shall have no strength before me: yea, I will slay them in my anger, and tread them down in my fury; and I will break the strength of their mighty ones before me, and all their wise men will I consume.”³³¹

On the day of his return, Christ shall slay everyone not allied with him in the wine press of his wrath.³³² Within Rev 6–19, the Greek words for “anger” (*orgē*) or “wrath” (*thymos*) appear thirteen times (e.g. Rev 11:16–18 and Rev 16:1).³³³ These terms occur more often in the Greek translation of the OT (623x) compared to the New Testament (NT) (54x).³³⁴ Nevertheless, the view that, in the NT, God always loves and never punishes sin does not conform to the testimony of the NT.³³⁵

³²¹ Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1061.

³²² Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 962.

³²³ Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “ποιμαίνω” (*poimainō*), *BDAG*, 842.

³²⁴ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “רָא” (*rā’ā*), *BDB*, 949,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/948/mode/2up>.

³²⁵ Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 962.

³²⁶ Gray, trans., “The Psalms of Solomon,” in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, 17:24, <http://www.goodnewsinc.net/othbooks/psalmsol.html>.

³²⁷ Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1062.

³²⁸ Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 280–1.

³²⁹ Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1144.

³³⁰ Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1061.

³³¹ Pauli, “Comparison of Pentateuch: Jewish Publication Society 1917 Targums Onkelos, Jonathan Ben Uzziel/Palestinian, Jerusalem Fragments,” Isa 63:2–3, <http://juchre.org/targums/isaiah/comp/isa63.htm>.

³³² Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 963.

³³³ Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 355–6.

³³⁴ Results of Logos 7 word studies on the nouns “ὀργή” (*orgē*) and “θυμός” (*thymos*).

³³⁵ Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 356.

Read Rev 19:15. What does the sword in Christ’s mouth symbolize? How will the nations be affected by the Messiah’s rod of iron? Why is treading grapes an image of God’s wrath? What warning or encouragement do you derive from this verse?

King of Kings and Lord of Lords

e) **Rev 19:16:** John’s description of the rider on the white steed in Rev 19:11–16 concludes by saying, “And he has on his robe and on his thigh a name which had been inscribed, ‘King of kings and Lord of lords.’ Where exactly this title appears causes some controversy among commentators.³³⁶ Is it written in two places or on only one?³³⁷

Fortunately, Greek grammar assists us here. The word which we usually translate as “and” (*kai*) can also mean “that is” or “namely.”³³⁸ As a result, we can be translate this clause as, “And he has on his robe, namely, on his thigh, a name....”

When astride a horse, a person’s thighs present prominently, making them appropriate places for an exalted title. Warriors also hung their swords from their thighs (Exod 32:27; Judg 3:16).³³⁹ In addition, someone taking an oath would place a hand under the thigh of the one receiving the promise (Gen 24:2–4; Gen 47:29–31). Therefore, this detail in Revelation symbolizes that Jesus’s victory over evil will fulfill the Lord’s promise to judge the wicked.³⁴⁰

John’s original audience would have recognized this imagery.³⁴¹ The second century AD geographer Pausanias wrote this about a statue he saw:

“The offering of the Mendeans in Thrace came very near to beguiling me into the belief that it was a representation of a competitor in the pentathlon ...It holds ancient jumping-weights. A... couplet is written on its thigh, ‘To Zeus, king of the gods, as first-fruits was I placed here.’”³⁴²

Written on the messiah’s thigh, an inscription says: “King of kings and Lord of lords.” In the Old Testament, that title applied to Yahweh as the supreme ruler (Deut 10:16–18; Ps 136:1–3; Dan 2:47).³⁴³

Jewish apocryphal books also applied this term only to God. For example, 1 Enoch (2nd century BC–1st century AD) says:

“Then they said to their Lord, the King, Thou art *Lord of lords*, God of gods, *King of kings*. The throne of thy glory is for ever and ever, and for ever and ever is thy name sanctified and glorified. Thou art blessed and glorified. Thou hast made all things; thou possessest power

³³⁶Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1062.

³³⁷Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 963.

³³⁸Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “καί” (*kai*), *BDAG*, 494–6, 495.

³³⁹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 356.

³⁴⁰Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1144.

³⁴¹Keener, *Revelation*, 455.

³⁴²Pausanias, *Description of Greece* (trans. W. H. S. Jones and H. A. Ormerod; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918), 5.27.12,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0160%3Abook%3D5%3Achapter%3D27%3Asection%3D12>. I had the privilege of seeing a similar statue of an athlete in the exhibition The Greeks (<http://press.nationalgeographic.com/2016/03/23/greeks-exhibition-to-open-june-1-at-national-geographic-museum-in-washington-d-c/>)

³⁴³Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 356.

over all things; and all things are open and manifest before thee...Nothing can be concealed from thee.”³⁴⁴

Plutarch (ca. 45–125 AD) noted that the Roman ruler Pompey “would not deign, in answering a letter from the king of Parthia, to address him as King of Kings, which was his usual title.”³⁴⁵

People within the Ancient Near East also applied that title to human kings (Dan 2:36–38; Ezek 26:7; Ezra 7:12).³⁴⁶ The Lord overturned the claim of King Nebuchadnezzar (534–562 BC) to the title King of kings (Dan 4:30–37). Even so shall Christ overthrow the beast of Revelation (Rev 13:1–2; Rev 19:20).³⁴⁷

Here “King of kings and Lord of lords” applies to Christ, rather than referring strictly to Yahweh (Cf. Rev 17:14).³⁴⁸ Ultimately, Jesus rules over all the kings on the earth (Phil 2:9–11; Rev 1:5).³⁴⁹ Everyone will see this when he triumphs over all his enemies.³⁵⁰

Read Rev 19:16. What is the significance of the inscription on the rider’s thigh? How does the photograph of a Hungarian crown (<https://redemptivehistorytheology.com/blog/chapter-7-god-opens-the-heavens-and-earth-genesis-7-1-24/king-of-kings-and-lord-of-lords/>) illustrate this truth?

The Great Supper of God

f) Rev 19:17–19: These verses form the preface to the destruction of the ungodly world system which will begin with the devastation of a city identified as Babylon in Rev 18:1–3.³⁵¹ John wrote, “And I saw an angel standing in the sun, and it cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in mid-heaven, ‘Come. Gather for the great supper of God.’”

By standing in the sun, this angel stood in a position of appropriate splendor.³⁵² The herald made the announcement before the battle occurred, portending certain victory.³⁵³ In stark contrast to the wedding celebration of the lamb and his bride (Rev 19:7–8; Isa 25:6–9; Matt 8:11),³⁵⁴ this feast by predatory birds will create a grim spectacle.³⁵⁵

Ironically, the Babylonian creation epic *Enuma Elish* describes a scene after the great battle against rebel gods and the completion of Babylon.³⁵⁶ It says: “The three hundred Igigi (gods)...all of them gathered, the lord being on the lofty dais which they had built as his abode, the gods, his fathers, at his banquet he seated, [saying], “This is

³⁴⁴Charles, trans., “Book of Enoch,” in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, 9:4–6, 21. <http://archive.org/stream/cu31924067146773#page/n135/mode/2up>. Italics mine.

³⁴⁵Plutarch, “Pompey,” in *Plutarch’s Lives* (trans. Bernadotte Perrin; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917), 38.2,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0058%3Achapter%3D38%3Asection%3D2>.

³⁴⁶Keener, *Revelation*, 454.

³⁴⁷Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 963–4.

³⁴⁸Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1062–3.

³⁴⁹Keener, *Revelation*, 454–5.

³⁵⁰Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 356.

³⁵¹Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 965.

³⁵²Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 357.

³⁵³Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 965.

³⁵⁴Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1063.

³⁵⁵Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 357.

³⁵⁶Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1063.

Babylon, the place that is your home! Make merry in its precincts, occupy its broad [places].” The great gods took their seats, they set up festive drink, sat down to a banquet.³⁵⁷

The birds in John’s vision will feast upon flesh with no concern for human rank or social status.³⁵⁸ The angel called them together, “that you might eat flesh of kings, and flesh of generals, and flesh of [the] mighty, and flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and flesh of all free [people], and also of slaves, even the small and the great.”

John’s readers recognized the image of birds scavenging the corpses of people killed in battle (1 Sam 17:44–47; Jer 16:4; Ezek 29:3–6).³⁵⁹ People in the ancient world considered that a horrendous, dishonorable fate.³⁶⁰ In Jewish and Greco-Roman views of death, a person’s image continued to endure in the underworld (1 Sam 28:11–14).³⁶¹ Therefore, they regarded such mutilation as a fate worse than dying.

Homer (ca. 750 BC) wrote this speech to a warrior:

“Hector, my dear child, abide not...alone with none to aid thee, lest forthwith thou meet thy doom, slain by the son of Peleus, since verily he is far the mightier—cruel that he is. I would that he were loved by the gods even as by me! Then would the dogs and vultures speedily devour him as he lay unburied; so would dread sorrow depart from my soul, seeing he hath made me bereft of sons many and valiant.”³⁶²

The apostle’s original audience likely perceived this despicable end as the fulfillment of Ezek 39:1–6, 17–20.³⁶³ Thus, they recognized Gog and Magog as the beast, the false prophet, and their armies whom Christ would vanquish.³⁶⁴ As in Rev 19:11–16, Ezek 39:7–8, 21 stresses the importance of God making known his holy name.³⁶⁵ Jesus shall accomplish this by delivering his people and rendering judgment to their oppressors.³⁶⁶ John’s list of those who would die parallels the one in Rev 6:14–17.³⁶⁷ His depiction of devastation coming upon the oppressors of God’s people encouraged persecuted believers.³⁶⁸

The apostle described what he saw next, writing, “And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies having been gathered together to make the war with the one sitting on the horse and with his armies.” This fulfills the prophecy of Rev 16:13–14. That a definite article (“the”) appears with the word “war” in the Greek texts of Rev 16:14, Rev 19:19, and Rev 20:8 indicates that all three verses speak of one battle.³⁶⁹

Battle in Armageddon shall commence.³⁷⁰ The beast will join Satan and his demonic forces to assemble kings and their armies. Although they will believe that they act of their own accord, God will muster these armies (Ezek 39:1–2; Zech 14:2–5).³⁷¹ This great battle will swiftly put an end to all evil and usher in the long-awaited new era of righteousness.³⁷²

³⁵⁷Speiser, trans., “Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic),” in *ANET*, 6:69–75, 69,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n93/mode/2up.

³⁵⁸Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 357–8.

³⁵⁹Keener, *Revelation*, 455.

³⁶⁰Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 358.

³⁶¹L. Wächter, “שְׁאוֹל” (*sheol*) *TDOT* 14:239–48, 241–2.

³⁶²Homer, *The Iliad*, 22:38–44,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0134%3Abook%3D22%3Acard%3D38>.

³⁶³Keener, *Revelation*, 455.

³⁶⁴Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 966.

³⁶⁵Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1144.

³⁶⁶Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 966.

³⁶⁷Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1064.

³⁶⁸Keener, *IVPBCNT*, Rev 19:17–18.

³⁶⁹Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 967–8.

³⁷⁰Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 358.

³⁷¹Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 967.

³⁷²Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 358.

Read Rev 19:17–19. What will the angel call the birds to do? Why did John’s original readers consider such mutilation a fate worse than death? How do Old Testament texts specify that the Lord will assemble these armies?

Cast into the Inferno

g) Rev 19:20–21: The foretold judgment of Rev 19:11–19 shall finally take place. As throughout the book of Revelation, John gave no portrayal of the battle but described only the result.³⁷³ He wrote, “And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs before him, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.”

Nero inflicted horrific persecution upon the Christian community during his reign over the Roman Empire (54–68 AD). The Greco-Roman historian Tacitus (56–120 AD) noted:

“To get rid of the report [that he set Rome on fire in 64 AD] Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their center and become popular.

“Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty, then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.”³⁷⁴

Therefore, many believers in the early church viewed Nero as the beast, with “Babylon” serving as a code word for Rome (Rev 13:1–9; Rev 17:1–9). Even after Nero committed suicide, many people concluded he was not truly dead but would return in the future.³⁷⁵

Suetonius (ca. 69–140 AD), a Roman historian, reported:

“[Nero] died in the thirty-second year of his age, upon the same day on which he had formerly put [his wife] Octavia to death; and the public joy was so great upon the occasion, that the common people ran about the city...Some, however...for a long time decked his tomb with spring and summer flowers. Sometimes they placed his image upon the [dais], dressed in robes of state...They published proclamations in his name, as if he were still alive, and would shortly return to Rome, and take vengeance on all his enemies.”³⁷⁶

³⁷³Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1065.

³⁷⁴Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.44,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text;jsessionid=3DDF615647A0DBAE5788C50EBD09314B?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0078%3Abook%3D15%3Achapter%3D44>.

³⁷⁵Miriam T. Griffin, “Nero (Emperor),” *ABD* 4: 1076–80, 1080.

³⁷⁶C. Suetonius Tranquillus, “Nero,” in *Suetonius: The Lives of the Twelve Caesars; an English Translation, Augmented with the Biographies of Contemporary Statesmen, Orators, Poets, and Other Associates* (ed. J. Eugene Reed; trans. Alexander Thomson; Philadelphia: Gebbie & Co., 1889), 57,

Gen 4–11 Chapter 7: God Opens the Heavens and the Earth (Gen 7:1–24) DT Plichta

The Christian apocryphal book the *Ascension of Isaiah* (ca. 150–200 AD) also cites Nero as the beast,³⁷⁷ calling him “the slayer of his mother:”

“These are the days of the completion of the world...Beliar [the devil], the great ruler, the king of this world, will descend...in the likeness of a man, a lawless king, the slayer of his mother who... will persecute the [church]...This ruler in the form of that king will come and there will come with him all the powers of this world, and they will hearken unto him in all that he desires.

“And at his word the sun will rise at night and he will make the moon to appear at the sixth hour. And all that he hath desired he will do in the world...and speak like the Beloved and he will say, ‘I am God and before me there has been none.’

“And all the people in the world will believe in him. And they will sacrifice to him and they will serve him...And after (one thousand) three hundred and thirty-two days the Lord will come with his angels and with the armies of the holy ones...and he will drag Beliar into Gehenna and also his armies.”³⁷⁸

Similarly, John did not depict the armies of God engaging the enemy. Instead, the divine warrior on the white steed will seize the Antichrist.³⁷⁹ John previously described the false prophet in terms of his functions. He will perform miracles and force people to receive the mark of the beast (Rev 13:11–17).³⁸⁰ The beast shall make claims of deity and the false prophet will enforce obligatory worship.³⁸¹

However, this shall be their fate: “While living, these two were cast into the lake of fire which is burning with sulfur.” That statement evoked images of Gehenna in the minds of John’s original audience. Jesus referred to the burning trash dump outside of Jerusalem as a metaphor for the place of eternal punishment (Matt 5:22, 29–30; Matt 10:28; Matt 23:29–33).³⁸²

Fire and sulfur also allude to the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24–25),³⁸³ as well as the judgment foretold for Gog and Magog (Ezek 38:18–22).³⁸⁴ Within Israel, sulfur occurs in volcanic areas near the Dead Sea. A highly flammable substance, it produces an intensely hot and malodorous fire.³⁸⁵ Divine judgment by fire occurred several times in the Old Testament (e.g. Lev 10:1–2; Num 16:35–38).³⁸⁶ However, in the Bible, the notion of a lake of fire appears only in Revelation.³⁸⁷

The Jewish apocryphal book of 1 Enoch (second century BC–first century AD) describes “a deep valley with burning fire. And they brought the kings and the mighty and began to cast them into this deep valley.”³⁸⁸ Within the Greco-Roman milieu, the underworld of Hades contained a fiery river.³⁸⁹

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0132%3A1ife%3Dnero%3Achapt%3D57>.

³⁷⁷Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 968.

³⁷⁸Charles, trans., “The Ascension of Isaiah,” in *APOT*, 4.2–14, 24–33, <https://archive.org/stream/cu31924014590529#page/n103/mode/2up>.

³⁷⁹Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1065.

³⁸⁰Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 358–9.

³⁸¹Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 969.

³⁸²Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 359.

³⁸³Keener, *Revelation*, 455.

³⁸⁴Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 969.

³⁸⁵Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 359.

³⁸⁶Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1066.

³⁸⁷Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 359.

³⁸⁸Charles, trans., “Book of Enoch,” in *APOT*, 54:1–2, 105,

<http://archive.org/stream/cu31924067146773#page/n219/mode/2up>.

³⁸⁹Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1066–7.

Gen 4–11 Chapter 7: God Opens the Heavens and the Earth (Gen 7:1–24) DT Plichta

According to Plato (427–347 BC), “There are everlasting rivers of huge size under the earth, flowing with hot and cold water; and there is much fire, and great rivers of fire.”³⁹⁰

Jesus will first cast the Antichrist and the false prophet into the inferno.³⁹¹ John then reported, “the rest were killed by the sword of the one sitting on the horse, which came from his mouth, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.” In this case, “the rest” refers to the individuals prepared for battle against the Lord.³⁹²

Jesus will kill them by his spoken word of divine retribution (Heb 4:12–13),³⁹³ not by a literal sword (Zech 14:1–5, 12–15; 2 Thess 2:1–12). In effect, his sword represents a decree of death. Their final doom shall come when Christ pronounces their fate, saying, “Depart from me, those who have been cursed, into the eternal fire which had been prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt 25:41; Rev 20:10–15).³⁹⁴

The Essenes (2nd century BC–68 AD) of Qumran separated themselves from other Jewish people to pursue their ascetic practices.³⁹⁵ They held this view of the end of the age: “The Master shall bless the Prince of the Congregation...that he may establish the kingdom of his people forever, dispense justice...and that he may establish his holy covenant at the time of the affliction of those who seek God...[May you smite the peoples] with the might of your hand and ravage the earth with your scepter; may you bring death to the ungodly with the breath of your lips!...May [God] make your horns of iron and your hooves of bronze; may you toss like a young bull [and trample the peoples] like the mire of the streets!”³⁹⁶

At last, the promised supper of God’s wrath will be ready (Ezek 39:4; Rev 19:17–18).³⁹⁷ The enemies of Christ shall not receive a proper burial. Instead, birds of prey and scavengers will feast upon their flesh.³⁹⁸ Jesus and his followers will finally experience complete victory over evil (Isa 66:22–24; Ps 110).³⁹⁹

Read Rev 19:20–21. Why did believers in John’s era believe that Nero was the Antichrist? How did the judgment upon the beast and the false prophet fit with Jewish and Greco-Roman expectations? What will be the fate of those allied against Christ and his armies? How do the events of this passage resemble what the people in Noah’s generation experienced? In what ways do they differ? How does knowing this affect you?

³⁹⁰Plato, “Phaedo,” in *Plato in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 1* (trans. Harold North Fowler; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 111d, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0170%3Atext%3DPhaedo%3Asection%3D111d>.

³⁹¹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 359.

³⁹²Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1067.

³⁹³Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 359.

³⁹⁴Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 970–1.

³⁹⁵John J. Collins, “Essenes,” *ABD* 2:619–26, 621.

³⁹⁶Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English, 4th ed.*, 1Q28b Col. 5:20, 270, https://archive.org/stream/pdfy-Uy_BZ_QGsaLiJ4Zs/The%20Dead%20Sea%20Scrolls%20%5BComplete%20English%20Translation%5D#page/n445/mode/2up.

³⁹⁷Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 359.

³⁹⁸Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1068.

³⁹⁹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 359–60.