



the journal of

Inductive Biblical Studies



Summer 2022 • Vol. 8/2

published by first fruits press of asbury theological seminary
asbury.to/jibs



NOT TO BE USED WITHOUT COPYRIGHT PERMISSION
OF ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE JOURNAL OF

Inductive
Biblical
Studies



VOLUME VIII

Summer 2022

NOT BE REPRODUCED WITHOUT THE WRITING PERMISSION
OF ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE JOURNAL OF

Inductive Biblical Studies

TIMOTHY C. TENNENT
President and Publisher

GREGG A. OKESSON
Provost

ISSN 2372-0727

Published in Winter and Summer

Content and articles may be copied for personal or classroom use. Permission to otherwise reprint must be granted by the editor and the author.



204 N. Lexington Avenue
Wilmore, Kentucky 40390

asburyseminary.edu
800.2ASBURY

The Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies intends to promote the hermeneutical approach to the study of the Scriptures generally known as Inductive Biblical Studies. By Inductive Biblical Study (IBS) we mean the hermeneutical movement initiated by William Rainey Harper and Wilbert Webster White that was embodied in the curriculum of The Biblical Seminary in New York founded in 1900. This approach had precursors in the history of interpretation and has since the beginning of the twentieth-century enjoyed widespread dissemination, being taught at such institutions as Princeton Theological Seminary, Columbia Theological Seminary, Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, Fuller Theological Seminary, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, Azusa Pacific University, and Asbury Theological Seminary, as well as hundreds of other institutions and organizations around the world.

CHIEF EDITORS

David R. Bauer

*Dean of the School of Biblical Interpretation, Ralph Waldo Beeson
Professor of Inductive Biblical Studies, Asbury Theological Seminary*

Fredrick J. Long

*Professor of New Testament, Director of Greek Instruction,
Asbury Theological Seminary*

EDITORIAL BOARD

G. Richard Boyd

Associate Professor of Biblical Studies, Wesley Biblical Seminary

Joseph R. Dongell

Professor of Biblical Studies, Asbury Theological Seminary

Michael D. Matlock

*Associate Professor of Inductive Biblical Studies and Old Testament,
Asbury Theological Seminary*

Alan J. Meenan

Founder/President/Chief Executive of The Word Is Out Ministry

James C. Miller

*Professor of Inductive Biblical Studies and New Testament,
Asbury Theological Seminary*

Suzanne B. Nicholson

Professor of Biblical Studies, Asbury University

Brian D. Russell

Professor of Biblical Studies, Asbury Theological Seminary

Dorothy Jean Weaver

Emerita Professor of New Testament, Eastern Mennonite Seminary

For more information, contact
David R. Bauer or Fredrick J. Long
Asbury Theological Seminary
204 N. Lexington Ave.
Wilmore, KY 40390

<http://place.asburyseminary.edu/jibs/>

© Copyright 2022 by Asbury Theological Seminary

NOT TO BE USED WITHOUT COPYRIGHT PERMISSION

OF ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies

VOLUME 8/2

Summer 2022

Table of Contents

- 4 From the Editors
Fredrick J. Long
- 7 The Slaughtered Lamb Shepherds with a Rod of Iron:
The Use of Psalm 2:9 in Revelation
Daniel Harris
- 31 Ten Commandments or Prohibitions? Numbering the
Ten Words
W. Creighton Marlowe
- 49 Paul's Eschatological Joy in Philippians in Its Jewish
Background
Shishou Chen
- 73 A Journey with Inductive Bible Study: From Ignorance
to Practitioner
G. Richard Boyd
- 87 A Tribute to WILLIAM J. ABRAHAM (1947-2021)
Alan J. Meenan
- 91 A Good Steward: William J. "Billy" Abraham (1947-
2021)—A Tribute delivered at Asbury Theological
Seminary, October 15, 2021
Jason E. Vickers

NOT TO BE USED WITHOUT COPYRIGHT PERMISSION
ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

From the Editors

Fredrick J. Long

After a year hiatus, we are happy to offer this Summer issue of *JIBS* Volume 8, even if it is a year late (2022 instead of 2021). This issue features three articles, a journey with Inductive Biblical Studies, and two tributes.

First, Daniel Ethan Harris in “The Slaughtered Lamb Shepherds with a Rod of Iron: The Use of Psalm 2:9 in Revelation” performs intertextual work that pays attention to how Revelation renders the LXX verb “to shepherd” rather than the Hebrew “to break.” Interpreters have long understood that NT authors preferred the LXX, but Harris argues that this preference in Revelation is for thematic development of the “portrayal of Christ’s messianic character for the ongoing spiritual formation of Christians.”

Second, W. Creighton Marlowe in “Ten Commandments or Prohibitions? Numbering the Ten Words” considers how best we should understand the Ten words of Yahweh. What may surprise readers is how varied church leaders and commentators have been in their accounting of the “Ten Commandments.” In the end, Marlowe argues that these should be understood as Ten Prohibitions with two adjunctive commands.

Third, Shishou Chen in “Paul’s Eschatological Joy in Philippians in Its Jewish Background” deploys inductive biblical study to explicate the central theme of joy in Philippians. Chen first traces the theme of joy in the Jewish Intertestamental literature and then compares this with Paul’s presentation of present joy and future joy in Philippians. He concludes that joy in Paul is gospel-centered and tri-dimensional, extending between God, Paul, and the Philippians.

Fourth, G. Richard Boyd in “A Journey with Inductive Bible Study: From Ignorance to Practitioner” offers a compelling account of the transformative impact of careful, detailed, and faithful study of Scripture. Rick’s account is sober and earnest and attests to the indebtedness that many students of IBS have to our teaching mentors, Dr. David Bauer, Dr. Joseph Dongell, and Dr. David Thompson. In the end, Rick attests to the privilege we have to encounter “the thoughts and the presence of God in the pages of Scripture.”

Finally, we mourn the loss of William (Billy) J. Abraham (1947-2021), who was accomplished in scholarship, devout in his calling, and dedicated to the Gospel of Christ. *JIBS* was honored to have Dr. Abraham on our editorial board. In this Summer 2022 issue, we are privileged to offer two tributes to Billy. The first comes by Alan J. Meenan describing Billy’s as “an extraordinary life lived purposefully, intentionally and magnificently for the glory of God”; and the second by Jason E. Vickers, delivered at Asbury Theological Seminary, October 15, 2021, heralding him, among other things, as a “Good Steward.”



The Slaughtered Lamb Shepherds with a Rod of Iron: The Use of Psalm 2:9 in Revelation

Daniel Ethan Harris
B. H. Carroll Theological Institute
daniel.harris@bhccarroll.edu

Abstract: With Revelation as the book of the New Testament that refers most frequently to Ps 2, and with Ps 2 as the Psalm to which Revelation alludes most often, John repeatedly invites hearers and readers to give attention to his usage of the second Psalm as a tool for conveying his apocalyptic understanding of the role and identity of the Messiah. Recognition of John's recurrent utilization of the verb from the LXX of Ps 2:9 ("to shepherd") rather than the Hebrew ("to break") forms a verbal thread through which John subverts militaristic expectations of a messiah who conquers through violence by the shocking identification of the victorious Messiah as the slaughtered lamb. This essay explores this verbal thread in detail, including considerations of its implications for understanding the nature of God's wrath and the importance of clarity on Revelation's portrayal of Christ's messianic character for the ongoing spiritual formation of Christians.

Keywords: Revelation, Psalm 2, Lamb, Rod of Iron, Shepherd, Apocalyptic

As the book of the New Testament most permeated by the Old Testament,¹ Revelation requires its hearers and readers to give attention to intertextuality. Eugene H. Peterson observes, "the Revelation has 404 verses. In those 404 verses, there are 518 references to earlier scripture. If we are not familiar with the preceding writings, quite obviously we are not going to understand the Revelation."²

¹ G. 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, 2007), 1081.

² Eugene H. Peterson, *Reversed Thunder: The Revelation of John and the Praying Imagination* (1988; repr., New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 23. The observed number of

Not only does Revelation inundate readers in a “pool of images”³ familiar to John’s original audience, but the text includes numerous instances of repetition and modulation of the images, inviting the readers to utilize the repeated words, phrases, and Old Testament references for mutual interpretation. Understanding John’s inclusion of such repetition in his apocalyptic, prophetic, and epistolary style is necessary for interpreting any particular passage within the overall message of the book because of what J. Webb Mealy describes as the “extensive network of cross-references and allusions that affects the interpretation of virtually every passage in Revelation.”⁴ Richard Bauckham comments:

A remarkable feature of the composition of Revelation is the way in which very many phrases occur two or three times in the book, often in widely separated passages, and usually in slightly varying form. These repetitions create a complex network of textual cross-reference, which helps to create and expand the meaning of any one passage by giving it specific relationships to many other passages. We are dealing here not with the writing habit of an author who saved effort by using phrases more than once, but with a skillfully deployed compositional device. One reason we can be sure of this is that such phrases almost never recur in precisely the same form. The author seems to have taken deliberate care to avoid the obviousness of precise

OT references in Revelation varies significantly among scholars. Jan Fekkes cites totals in studies ranging from 250 to 700, commenting, “a differential of 50 or perhaps even 100 suggested allusions between scholars is not unreasonable to expect in a book such as Revelation, but one of 450 (250 versus 700) is unacceptable.” See Jan Fekkes, *Isaiah and the Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation: Visionary Antecedents and their Development*, LNTS (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 62.

³ M. Robert Mulholland Jr. often uses the phrase “pool of images” to describe the resources from which John draws in attempting to convey his visionary experience to others in an apocalyptic literary form. For example, he states, “The current pool of images, myths, and symbols of Revelation are drawn primarily from the image pool of the Old Testament and intertestamental Judaism, with some resident in the Roman-Hellenistic world.” See Mulholland, *Revelation: Holy Living in an Unholy World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 23 and Mulholland, “Literary Style,” in *Revelation*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2011), 410–12.

⁴ J. Webb Mealy, *After the Thousand Years: Resurrection and Judgment in Revelation 20*, JSNTSup 70 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 13.

repetition, while at the same time creating phrases which closely allude to each other.⁵

Bauckham continues and explores multiple instances of “John’s deliberate practice of varying such phrases,”⁶ although an example which fits his description but he leaves unconsidered⁷ is Revelation’s “verbal thread”⁸ of thrice-repeated but varied references to Ps 2:9’s “rod of iron” in Rev 2:27, 12:5, and 19:15.

Ps 2:9a (MT)	Ps 2:9a (LXX Rahlfs)	Rev 2:27a, 12:5b, 19:15b (NA28)
תָּרַעַם בְּשֶׁבֶט בְּרִזְזָהּ	ποιμανεῖς αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ,	<p>2:27a: καὶ ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ</p> <p>12:5b: ὃς μέλλει ποιμαίνειν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ.</p> <p>19:15b: καὶ αὐτὸς ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ,</p>

⁵ Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (New York: Continuum, 1993), 22.

⁶ Ibid., 23. See the full section 2, “Repetition and Variation of Phrases,” 22–29.

⁷ Bauckham does not intend his instances considered to be exhaustive. Although he explores more than seventy verses with such repetition, he also states, “doubtless many other examples could be found” (*Climax of Prophecy*, 27).

⁸ James L. Resseguie, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 25. Resseguie identifies verbal threads as one of several rhetorical devices used by John and describes verbal threads as “repeated words or phrases that tie together a section, even the entire book, and often elaborate a main theme or subthemes of a passage.” In addition to fitting Resseguie’s description of a verbal thread, this characteristic of repetition in Revelation also fits what Robert Alter describes as a “word-motif” or a “*Leitwort*.” See Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, rev. ed. (New York: Basic, 2001), 116–17.

Illustrative of Mealy’s “extensive network of cross-references and allusions,” this verbal thread also directly connects to other content of Revelation in two directions, each to be considered further below. First, Revelation both refers to Psalm 2 more than any other NT, and it refers to Ps 2 more than to any other psalm.⁹ Bauckham provides a synopsis of the multiple influences of Ps 2 on Revelation:

One of John’s key Old Testament texts, allusions to which run throughout Revelation, is Psalm 2, which depicts ‘the nations’ and ‘the kings of the earth’ conspiring to rebel against ‘the Lord and his Messiah’ (verses 1–2). The Messiah is God’s Son (verse 7), whom he sets as king on mount Zion (verse 6), there to resist and overcome the rebellious nations. God promises to give this royal Messiah the nations for his inheritance (verse 8) and that he will violently subdue them with a rod of iron (verse 9). Allusions to this account of the Messiah’s victory over the nations are found in Revelation 2:18, 26–8; 11:15, 18; 12:5, 10; 14:1; 16:14, 16; 19:15. To what is explicit in the psalm it is notable that John adds the Messiah’s army (with him on Mount Zion in 14:1) who will share his victory (2:26–7). Probably also from the psalm is John’s use of the phrase ‘the kings of the earth’ as his standard term for the political powers opposed to God which Christ will subdue (1:5; 6:15; 17:2, 18; 18:3, 9; 19:19; 21:24; cf. 16:14).¹⁰

Therefore, the verbal thread that runs from Ps 2’s rod of iron throughout Revelation is part of John’s broader usage of “the first and most

⁹ This is so according to the index of quotations and allusions in Eberhard Nestlé and Kurt Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 783–88. Ben Witherington III comments that the index “represents the maximum one could claim when it comes to the use of the Psalms in the NT.” See Appendix A in Witherington, *Psalms Old and New: Exegesis, Intertextuality, and Hermeneutics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 333. Such lists vary widely, as described in Jon Paulien, “Criteria and Assessment of Allusions to the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation” in *Studies in the Book of Revelation*, edited by Steve Moyise (New York: Continuum, 2001), 113–29.

¹⁰ Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, New Testament Theology (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 69.

prominent of the royal psalms”¹¹ illuminating the Apocalypse’s understanding of how the Messiah rules.

Second, the verbal thread also runs from the differing Hebrew and Greek verbs associated with the rod of iron in Ps 2 to “the central and centering image of Revelation . . . the lamb that was slaughtered.”¹² As will be demonstrated below, John utilizes this verbal thread of language from Ps 2:9 in Revelation to subvert violent, militaristic messianic expectations, allowing them to be redefined by what Michael J. Gorman calls a “Lamb-centered, cruciform” hermeneutic.¹³

The Root of the Verbal Thread: Psalm 2

Many scholars view Psalms 1 and 2 as being paired to introduce the entire Psalter.¹⁴ Peterson comments:

Two psalms are carefully set as an introduction: Psalm 1 is a laser concentration on the person; Psalm 2 is a wide-angle lens on politics. God deals with us personally, but at the same time he has public ways that intersect the lives of nations, rulers, kings, and governments. The two psalms are together by design, a *binocular* introduction to the life of prayer, an initiation into the responses that we make to the word of God personally (“blessed is the *man*,” 1:1) and

¹¹ *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, and Writings*, s.v. “Kingship Psalms.”

¹² Michael J. Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness: Following the Lamb into the New Creation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 90.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 89–91.

¹⁴ Including A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms (I—XLJ)*, The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (New York: Macmillan, 1892), xxxix; J. Clinton McCann Jr., “Psalms” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2015) 3:308; Susan Gillingham, “Psalms 1 and 2: The Prologue to the Psalter” *Psalms Through the Centuries, Vol. 2: A Reception History Commentary on Psalms 1–72*, Wiley Blackwell Bible Commentaries (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2018), 11–43; Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger Jr., *Psalms*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 32–34; John Goldingay, *Psalms*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 1:94–95. Janse summarizes arguments for and against, including the possibility that Psalms 1 and 2 were originally a unity in *You are My Son: The Reception History of Psalm 2 in Early Judaism and the Early Church*, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology (Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2009), 22–24, 29–35.

politically (“blessed are *all*,” 2:11). Psalm 1 presents the person who delights in meditating on the law of God; Psalm 2 presents the government that God uses to deal with the conspiratorial plots of peoples against his rule.¹⁵

Although the two psalms have their different emphases (Ps 1 on Torah and Ps 2 on God and the king), links between them demonstrate the pairing resulting in their prominence at the beginning of the Psalter, such as the lack of ascriptions and the following shared terms:

Ps 1 (MT/NRSV)	Ps 2 (MT/NRSV)
1:1: אֲשֶׁר־יִהְיֶה אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִלָּךְ בְּעֵצַת Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked	2:12: אֲשֶׁר־יִפְלֹחֻסִי בּוֹ: Happy are all who take refuge in him.
1:2: וּבְתוֹרַתוֹ יִהְיֶה יוֹמָם וּלְיָלִיָּהּ: on his law they meditate day and night	2:1: וּלְאֻמִּים יִהְגּוּרִיקוּ: the peoples plot in vain
1:6: וְדַרְךְ רְשָׁעִים תֵּאבֵד: the way of the wicked will perish	2:12: וְתֵאבְדוּ לְדֶרֶךְ: you will perish in the way

Because of this primacy in the Psalter and the “extravagance of the language,”¹⁶ Ps 2 later became a “messianic psalm par excellence”¹⁷ in early Christianity, yet it is primarily a psalm about God, the present king, and how they forcefully subdue nations that resist them rather

¹⁵ Peterson, *Where Your Treasure Is: Psalms That Summon You from Self to Community* (1985; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 9–10. Emphasis in original.

¹⁶ Witherington, *Psalms Old and New*, 41. He states, “the language is ... extravagant, but it is precisely the extravagance of the language that made it more easy to use in an eschatological and messianic way” (41, emphasis in original). Also, to emphasize the extravagance, he comments, “what is promised to the king in vv. 8–9 is breathtaking, nothing less than world dominion, not just one kingdom among many, and the power to judge the other nations, and even smash them to pieces like a clay jar if they do not submit” (43–44).

¹⁷ Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 2nd ed., WBC 19 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 68.

than a messianic prophecy about future royalty.¹⁸ In contrast to later Christian interpretation, Ps 2 itself “breathes an atmosphere of violence.”¹⁹ Accordingly, John Goldingay notes how the psalm “presupposes a relationship between Yhwh and the world based on force and violence. Yhwh insists on the nations’ submission and is prepared to use violence to put down nations that seek their independence.... It also presupposes that Yhwh associates the Israelite king with this control of the world by force and violence.”²⁰

Later Jewish interpretation of Ps 2 varies, and Sam Janse identifies Psalms of Solomon (Ps. Sol.) 17 as “the most clear-cut case of a Messianic interpretation of Ps. 2 in early Judaism.”²¹ It shares language with Ps 2 in multiple instances, including the king shattering sinners with an iron rod in 17:24. The verbs in Ps. Sol 17:23–24 (ἐκτρίβω/“to destroy/smash,” συντρίβω/“to break,” ὀλεθρεύω/“to destroy”) closely follow the parallelism of Ps 2:9 (עבר/“to break,” פּנּ /“to shatter”).²²

The Substance of the Verbal Thread: The Rod of Iron and its Verbs

Psalm 2’s context highlights a crucial distinction for understanding Revelation’s use of Ps 2 between the verbs associated with the messianic rod of iron in the MT and the LXX. Whereas Ps. Sol. 17:23–24 utilizes verbs reflective of the Hebrew in Ps 2:9, the LXX loses the clear parallelism of the MT by using ποιμαίνω/“to shepherd” for עבר, rather than the much closer συντρίβω/“to break” of Ps. Sol. 2:24. However, the verb choice of the LXX is not a groundless substitution but has its source in the similarities between the Hebrew for “to break” (עבר/ra‘a’/raw-ah’) and “to shepherd” (העב/ra‘ah/raw-aw’).²³

¹⁸ Goldingay, *Psalms*, 72.

¹⁹ Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 69.

²⁰ Goldingay, *Psalms*, 104.

²¹ Janse, *You are My Son*, 146.

²² Stephan Witetschek, “Der Lieblingspsalm des Sehers: Die Verwendung von Ps 2 in der Johannesapokalypse” in *The Septuagint and Messianism*, ed. by Michael A. Knibb, BELT 195 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2006), 490.

²³ Tim Mackie, “Does God Punish Innocent People?” November 16, 2020, *The Bible Project*, podcast, 34:40–45:59, <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/does-god-punish-innocent-people/>.

Varying theories have been proposed by scholars for the choices of verbs in the MT and LXX. Steve Moyise summarizes options,²⁴ including (1) that the LXX’s use of ποιμαίνω is a mistranslation of the Hebrew,²⁵ (2) that the LXX reflects a pre-Masoretic Hebrew tradition favoring a dual meaning of הָגַד, meaning both “to shepherd” and “to rule,” as in Mic. 5:4–6,²⁶ or (3) that “the LXX translator deliberately chose ποιμαίνω to echo the ambiguity of the Hebrew consonants.”²⁷ Regardless of the ultimately unknown cause of the LXX’s translation from the Hebrew, the usage of ποιμαίνω in the LXX becomes a link for John to connect eschatological and Messianic interpretations of Ps 2 to his Christological vision of the lamb throughout Revelation.

As shown in the introductory paragraphs above, John uses his deliberate practice of repeating and slightly varying his phrases of shepherding with a rod of iron as a literary device to invite attention to and careful interpretation of the respective passages. It first occurs as καὶ

²⁴ Steve Moyise, “Psalms in the Book of Revelation” in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, eds. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken, *The New Testament and the Scriptures of Israel* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 233–34 and Moyise, “The Language of the Psalms in the Book of Revelation,” *Neot* 37 (2003): 251–53.

²⁵ As in David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, WBC 52A (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 210–11. He concludes, “the author of Revelation was dependent on the mistranslated LXX version, rather than on the Hebrew original” (211). Also G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of St. John*, Black’s New Testament Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1966), 45–46, who says, “the preferable theory is that John, independently of the Septuagint, made the same mistake which the Septuagint translator had made before him—a perfectly understandable mistake for one to whom Greek was a foreign language—of supposing that, because the Hebrew *r’h* can mean both to pasture and to destroy, its Greek equivalent must be capable of bearing both meanings also” (45–46).

²⁶ As in Gerhard Wilhelmi, “Der Hirt mit dem eisernen Szepter: Überlegungen zu Psalm 2:9,” *VT* 27 (1977): 196–204.

²⁷ Moyise, “Psalms in the Book of Revelation,” 234. This is Moyise’s characterization of the position of G. K. Beale in Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999). Beale’s own comment is, “Either John or the LXX translator misunderstood the Hebrew or interpreted it or gave it a dynamic equivalence rendering. The latter options are more probable, since there are viable explanations to support them. John, the LXX translator, or both may have seen in the unpointed text an irony in that the ‘staff of iron’ was a symbol of destruction to the ungodly nations but a sign of protection to Israel. Consequently, ποιμαίνω (*r’h*) was chosen since it was more capable of encompassing these two apparently opposite ideas than was *r*” (‘smite’)” (267).

ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ/“to [shepherd]²⁸ them with an iron rod” in 2:26–27 as part of the letter to the church in Thyatira. Its second occurrence is as part of the heavenly vision of a woman, child, and dragon in 12:5: ὃς μέλλει ποιμαίνειν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ/“who is to [shepherd] all the nations with a rod of iron.” The third occurrence is part of the vision of Christ’s victory in 19:15: ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ/“and he will [shepherd] them with a rod of iron.” M. Robert Mulholland Jr. describes the central role of the phraseology from Ps 2:9 in these three instances:

The child of the woman (Christ) is the One who, from before Satan’s rebellion, is intended to shepherd the nations with a rod of iron (12:5). Christ, the heavenly warrior, has “a sharp sword coming forth from his mouth in order that he might strike the nations, and he will shepherd them with a rod of iron (19:15). As the Christians of Thyatira, and all the churches, encountered these aspects of the vision, they would realize that the first promise to the conquerors is that they become participants in Jesus’ victory over Fallen Babylon. Fallen Babylon is shattered like an earthenware vessel against the reality of New Jerusalem.²⁹

The Destination of the Verbal Thread: The Lamb at the Center of the Throne

John only uses ποιμαίνω one other time in addition to the instances cited above in connection with the rod of iron. The remaining occurrence is in 7:17 as part of the interlude between the sixth and seventh seals: ὅτι τὸ ἄρνιον τὸ ἀνά μέσον τοῦ θρόνου ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς/

²⁸ The large majority of English translations translate ποιμαίνω as “rule” in Rev 2:27, 12:5, and 19:15 even though it is consistently translated using pastoral terms (such as shepherd, flock, or tend) in all of the NT uses outside of Revelation. Therefore, for consistency and to more clearly reflect John’s usage, “shepherd” is substituted in brackets within the NRSV translations of these three verses in Revelation. All English translations throughout the paper are from the NRSV unless otherwise indicated.

²⁹ Mulholland, *Revelation* (1990), 117.

“for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd.”³⁰ Commentators noting allusions in Rev 7 validly recognize the influence of Ps 23, Isa 25, and Isa 49 in the imagery of the chapter,³¹ with Ps 23 and Isa 49 being two of the locations in the Old Testament that describe God as a shepherd and Isa 25 as an oracle of hope for God’s people including the destruction of death itself. Regarding Revelation’s use of Ps 2, however, the critical factor is that John’s use of *ποιμαίνω* serves as a link between the three rod of iron passages and the prominence of *ἀρνίον*/lamb as the most frequently used Christological title in Revelation.³² The image of the lamb is so central to Revelation that it is more likely to be underestimated by readers than overestimated. Commentators attempt to convey the magnitude of the centrality of the image of the lamb for John in various ways. Bauckham points out:

The word “Lamb”, referring to Christ, occurs 28 (7 × 4) times. Seven of these are in phrases coupling God and the Lamb together.... Four is, after seven, the symbolic number most commonly and consistently used in Revelation. As seven is the number of completeness, four is the number of the world (with its four corners (7:1; 20:8) or four divisions (5:13; 14:7). The first four judgments in each of the series of seven affect the world (6:8; 8:7–12; 16:2–9). The 7 × 4 occurrences of “Lamb” therefore indicate the worldwide scope of his complete victory.³³

³⁰ The Greek in this verse (*ποιμαίνειν*) uses shepherd as a verb, as also in 2:27, 12:5 and 19:15. The NRSV and most other English translations, however, turn it into a noun in 7:17. If 2:27, 12:5 and 19:15 were translated as “shepherd” rather than “rule,” and 7:17 were kept as a verb (i.e., “the lamb at the center of the throne will shepherd them”), this verbal thread would be more perceptible to English readers.

³¹ See Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” 1109. Although references to and stories of shepherds are pervasive in Old Testament imagery, John is relying most heavily on these depictions of God as shepherd. The fuller biblical imagery of shepherding should be in the reader’s awareness (for an overview, see *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, s.v. “Sheep, Shepherd”), but John’s emphasis is on the identity of the lamb as the one who shepherds.

³² See the list of references to Christ as a lamb in the verbal thread chart in the appendix.

³³ Bauckham, *Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 66–67.

Gorman sees the lamb as so central for John that he proposes “a Lamb-centered, cruciform” hermeneutic for reading Revelation and states the first strategy in such a hermeneutic is to “recognize that the central and centering image of Revelation is the Lamb that was slaughtered.”³⁴ Therefore, since the lamb “forms the centerpiece of the apocalypse,”³⁵ and since the common use of *ποιμαίνω* links the figure of the lamb to John’s reliance on Ps 2, the lamb is central to any appropriate interpretive lens for Revelation’s use of Ps 2. The hermeneutical effect of this passes back through the verbal thread’s three occurrences of shepherding with a rod of iron (allowing, for example, conceptions of the shepherding slaughtered lamb’s rod of iron to be informed by the pastoral and comforting rod and staff of Ps 23) and back into Ps 2, and thereby reinforcing one of the central pieces of Jewish messianism.

Looking for the Lion, Seeing the Lamb

John’s introduction of the lamb is presented as a shock to Revelation’s audience. M. Eugene Boring comments, “Although readers of the Bible may have become so accustomed to it that the effect is lost to us, this is perhaps the most mind-wrenching ‘rebirth of images’ in literature.”³⁶ It occurs as part of the first heavenly vision in 4:1–5:14,³⁷

³⁴ Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, 89–91. Gorman proposes five total strategies in the hermeneutic: (1) Recognize that the central and centering image of Revelation is the Lamb that was slaughtered. (2) Remember that Revelation was first of all written by a first-century Christian for first-century Christians using first-century literary devices and images. (3) Abandon so-called literal, linear approaches to the book as if it were history written in advance, and use an interpretive strategy of analogy rather than correlation. (4) Focus on the book’s call to public worship and discipleship. (5) Place the images of death and resurrection in Revelation within the larger framework of hope.

³⁵ Christopher C. Rowland, “The Book of Revelation” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary, Vol. 10* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2015), 936.

³⁶ M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation, Interpretation* (Louisville: John Knox, 1989), 108.

³⁷ This is also the structure of the book presented in Mulholland, *Revelation* (2011), 461. He states, “chapters 1–3 and 4–5 are two aspects of a single reality that has both earthly (chs 1–3) and heavenly (chs 4–5) dimensions.... Thus John is introducing the heavenly dimension of the vision for which the earthly dimension was given in chapters 1–3. As John’s original audience moved from Jesus’ address to the churches (2:1–3:22) into the first heavenly vision (4:1–5:14), they would have

with chapter 4 describing God’s throne and those who are worshipping God. Revelation 5:1–4 begins with a mention of a scroll in the right hand of God and describes John weeping after an angel asks, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” but “no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it.”³⁸

John then gives the first of his twenty-eight uses of ἀρνίον to refer to Christ as a lamb in what G. B. Caird describes as “one stroke of brilliant artistry [in which] John has given us the key to all his use of the Old Testament”.³⁹

Rev 5:5–6a	
NA28	NRSV
καὶ εἷς ἐκ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων λέγει μοι· μὴ κλαῖτε, ἰδοὺ ἐνίκησεν ὁ λέων ὁ ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Ἰούδα, ἡ ῥίζα Δαυὶδ, ἀνοῖξαι τὸ βιβλίον καὶ τὰς ἑπτὰ σφραγίδας αὐτοῦ. Καὶ εἶδον ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ τῶν τεσσάρων ζώων καὶ ἐν μέσῳ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων ἀρνίον ἑστηκὸς ὡς ἐσφαγμένον	Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.” Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered

Commentators with drastically differing interpretations of Revelation recognize the hermeneutical centrality of this passage. John P. Newport states, “this vision of God and Christ as the Lion and the Lamb

begun to comprehend through 4:1–22:21 the larger reality within which their life in the world was set, and to see more fully what faithful discipleship entailed” (461–62).

³⁸ Rev 5:3–4.

³⁹ Caird, *Revelation*, 74. Although Ps 2 is not referred to in this passage, the magnitude of Caird’s statement justifies inclusion of the exploration of lion and lamb images. The necessity of this exploration is doubly founded. First, it is necessary because of the verbal thread described above from lamb (5:6), to shepherd and lamb (7:17), to shepherding with a rod of iron (2:27, 12:5, 19:15), to Ps 2:9, to John’s broader reliance on Ps 2. Second, it is necessary because of the messianic emphases of the titles ὁ λέων ὁ ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Ἰούδα, ἡ ῥίζα Δαυὶδ/“the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David” in 5:5.

supplies the key to the theology of the entire work,⁴⁰ and Boring comments, “Two images of the Messiah, ‘Lion’ and ‘Lamb’ appear in this vision. The relationship between them is *crucial* to understanding all of Revelation’s theology.”⁴¹ Boring describes four interpretive options for the relationship between the lion (about which John hears) and the lamb (which John sees, both in this passage and repeatedly throughout the rest of the vision):

1. “*First the lamb, then the lion*”⁴²: This option characterizes Christ as having different roles described by each of the two images, a perspective epitomized in this statement from Newport: “In the second coming, Christ will not come humbly as the Lamb as He did in His first coming. Rather, He will come as the Lion, in glory and power.”⁴³ Thomas L. Constable interprets the images similarly:

John saw the Messiah as “a Lamb.” The diminutive form of *amnos* (“lamb,” namely, “little lamb,” *arnion*) enhances even more the contrast with the lion. The “lion” is a picture of strength and majesty, but this “little lamb” was meek and gentle. Christ combines both sets of characteristics. “The Lamb” is a symbol of Jesus Christ at His first advent, meek and submissive to a sacrificial death as our substitute (Isa. 53:7; John 1:36; 21:15)... The Lion is a symbol of Him at His second advent, powerful and aggressively judging the world in righteousness (Ps 2).⁴⁴

Significant exegetical problems exist with this option, including that it equalizes images to which John is giving disparate levels of emphasis. In light of John’s compositional utilization of repetition

⁴⁰ John P. Newport, *The Lion and the Lamb: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation for Today* (Nashville: Broadman, 1986), 113.

⁴¹ Boring, *Revelation*, 109. Emphasis in original.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Newport, *The Lion and the Lamb*, 335. For a full chapter advocating a similar view, see Skip Heitzig, “The Lamb Becomes a Lion,” in *Bloodline* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2018), 225-242.

⁴⁴ Thomas L. Constable, *Thomas Constable’s Notes on the Bible, Vol. 12: 1 John – Revelation* (Hurst, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2018), 222. For the purposes of this essay, it is significant that Constable connects his interpretation to Ps 2, indicating that he is either not aware of or does not approve of the implications of the verbal thread as presented in this paper.

considered above, the frequency of each term’s use in reference to Jesus is a valid, even if not conclusive, consideration. As already stated, John portrays Jesus as *ἀρνίον*/lamb twenty-eight times in Revelation while the occurrence in 5:5 is the sole reference to Christ as *λέων*/lion.

Because this is the sole reference to Christ as a lion, this issue of frequency of repetition (or the lack thereof) highlights another exegetical problem: John’s implied astonishment that, after hearing that he should see a lion, he does *not* see one:

Rev 5:5–6a	
NA28	NRSV
καὶ εἷς ἐκ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων λέγει μοι... ἰδοὺ ἐνίκησεν ὁ λέων ὁ ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Ἰούδα... Καὶ εἶδον... ἀρνίον ἐστηκὸς ὡς ἐσφαγμένον	Then one of the elders said to me, ... “See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah ... has conquered ... Then I saw ... a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered.

Boring emphasizes, “John looks at the appointed place in the vision where the Lion was supposed to appear, and what he sees is a slaughtered lamb.... The slot in the system reserved for the Lion has been filled by the Lamb of God.”⁴⁵ Boring then offers his strong critique of this interpretive option, describing the idea that “those who do not respond to the love offered by Jesus in his first coming get the apocalyptic violence of the second” as “the polar opposite of the meaning of the text of Revelation, in which the lion image is reinterpreted and replaced by the Lamb. It represents a retrogression from a Christian understanding of the meaning of Messiahship to the pre-Christian apocalyptic idea.”⁴⁶

2. *“Lamb to some, lion to others”*⁴⁷: According to this interpretation, Christ is pastorally comforting to his people while harsh like a lion toward unbelievers. This option seeks to balance John’s repetitive emphasis on Christ as the lamb with what some interpreters see as the lamb’s severe punitive treatment of unbelievers, such as the passages in which people cry out to be hidden *ἀπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς τοῦ ἀρνίου*/

⁴⁵ Boring, *Revelation*, 108.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

“from the wrath of the Lamb” (6:16) or are tormented with fire and sulfur ἐνώπιον τοῦ ἀρνίου/“in the presence of the Lamb” (14:10). The perceived cruelty of God’s wrath in passages such as these will be considered further below, but in the context of the verbal thread explored above, it must be highlighted that John is expressly and consistently using his image of the lamb, not of a lion.

3. “*The lamb really is a lion*”⁴⁸: Similar to the option above, this interpretation “concludes that the powerful ‘Lamb’ of Revelation is simply another version of the volent Messiah expected in Jewish apocalyptic.”⁴⁹ Reconciliation of the lamb and his perceived severity is also a motivation in this approach, although it places interpretations of messianic actions in Revelation at the center of the hermeneutical task rather than the messianic identity of the slaughtered lamb.

4. “*The ‘lion’ really is the lamb, representing the ultimate power of God*”⁵⁰: This is Boring’s preferred option and also that which best aligns with the trajectory of the verbal thread considered in this essay. He describes “the announced Lion that turns out to be a Lamb—slaughtered at that” as “one of the most ... theologically pregnant transformation of images in literature.”⁵¹ It should be noted that this approach need not be viewed as a cancellation of the respective images (as if John were claiming there actually were no Lion of the tribe of Judah in 5:5–6 or the Messiah did not have a rod of iron in 2:27, 12:5, and 19:15), but a “transformation,”⁵² “rebirth,”⁵³ reinterpretation,⁵⁴ “modulation,”⁵⁵ “redefinition”⁵⁶ or “inversion”⁵⁷ of the lion-represented

⁴⁸ Ibid., 109–10.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 110. Boring cites C. H. Dodd as “representative of a small group of scholars who advocate this position.” He cites Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 230–38.

⁵⁰ Boring, *Revelation*, 110–11.

⁵¹ Boring, “Narrative Christology in the Apocalypse,” *CBQ* 54 (1992): 708.

⁵² Boring, “Narrative Christology,” 708.

⁵³ Boring, *Revelation*, 110.

⁵⁴ Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 183 and *Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 74.

⁵⁵ Mulholland, *Revelation* (2011), 411.

⁵⁶ Steven J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 200.

⁵⁷ David L. Barr, *Tales of the End: A Narrative Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 1998), 70. Barr writes that the messianic images of the lion and the root of David were “the language of tradition that sees the establishment of God’s kingdom as an act of power—both the Jewish tradition and the Christian tradition use such language. Both have frequently imagined that only righteous

militaristic and nationalistic eschatological messianic expectation in light of the lamb. As Craig R. Koester notes,

What John *hears* about the Lion recalls promises from the Old Testament, and what he *sees* in the Lamb reflects the crucifixion of Christ. Both images point to the same reality. According to the Old Testament, God promised to send a powerful and righteous ruler. These promises are not rejected but fulfilled through the slaughtered yet living Lamb, who is not a hapless victim but a figure of royal strength.⁵⁸

While numerous scholars have noted the distinction between what John hears and what he sees in 5:5–6 and elsewhere,⁵⁹ Rebecca Skaggs and Thomas Doyle demonstrate a pattern among John’s descriptions of the things he sees and hears, with forty-four such instances in Revelation.⁶⁰

In all but eight of these, the vision is first, followed by the audition. What is “heard” clearly adds to or enhances what is “seen” without the meaning of either being changed. In contrast, there are only eight instances of the hearing preceding the vision. In each of these cases, what is seen *more than* adds to what is heard; what is heard is reinterpreted by what is seen. The classic example of this is the lion/Lamb imagery in Rev 5, where John hears the lion introduced and then turns to see the sacrificed Lamb. Here ... what is seen

violence can establish justice on earth. But this is not John’s way. John completely inverts this image. Rather than the lion who tears his prey (Ps 17:12), Jesus is the torn lamb. There is violence, to be sure, but it is endured not inflicted. Yet this lamb has conquered, has seven horns. This is a radical inversion of value and should guide us as we witness the action of subsequent scenes; we should not too quickly assume that the violence and conquest of this story are to be understood as the work of a lion. For this lion is a lamb-slain-standing-victorious.”

⁵⁸ Craig R. Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 81–82.

⁵⁹ Bauckham describes recognition of “the contrast between what [John] hears (5:5) and what he sees (5:6)” as “the key to John’s vision of the slaughtered lamb” (*Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 74).

⁶⁰ Rebecca Skaggs and Thomas Doyle, “The Audio/Visual Motif in the Apocalypse of John Through the Lens of Rhetorical Analysis,” *Journal of Biblical and Pneumatological Research* 3 (2011): 19–37.

enhances what is heard in order that the readers' understanding is broadened to include a new perspective.⁶¹

Royal Wrath Reinterpreted

If passages in Revelation are not reinterpreted according to the “lamb-centered, cruciform” hermeneutic⁶² called for by the verbal thread running through the rod of iron as explored in this essay, readers of Revelation are left with numerous images of a vengeful, violent, and harsh Christ in a book full of militaristic imagery strong enough to lead many Christians to the options of embracing the images of divine violence,⁶³ rejecting the book,⁶⁴ or simply ignoring it. Any one of

⁶¹ Ibid., 21. Emphasis in original. The eight such passages identified and explored in the article are 1:10–16; 5:5–6; 9:1–12, 13–21; 11:15–19; 16:1–7; 19:1–21:8; 21:9–22:5. The authors qualify that their view is that “the understanding of the Lamb is also impacted by the lion. Together, they create a synergy which enhances our understanding of the Apocalypse” (26). They explain their view further in Skaggs and Doyle, “Lion/Lamb in Revelation,” *CurBR* 7 (2009): 362–75. Their view is not as far from that of Boring as it is characterized, as Boring also emphasizes that the lamb is powerful. The pattern Skaggs and Doyle observe in the passages where hearing precedes sight is compatible with Boring’s fourth interpretive option summarized above.

⁶² Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, 89–91. See note 33 above.

⁶³ For example, as in the Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins *Left Behind* series of novels and in much dispensational theology. For instance, Constable says that Christ’s purpose “will be to pour out God’s wrath on His enemies for their refusal to receive His grace (16:1)... God has promised a ‘time of trouble’ that will be the worst that the world has seen (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 11:36–45). If God is faithful to His promises (and He is), there has to be a special time of tribulation yet future” (Constable, *Thomas Constable’s Notes on the Bible*, 168).

⁶⁴ For example, see John Dominic Crossan, “Chapter 11: Christ and the Normalcy of Civilization” in *How to Read the Bible and Still be a Christian: Struggling with Divine Violence from Genesis Through Revelation* (New York: HarperCollins, 2015), 173–85. Crossan states, “Revelation is filled, repeatedly, relentlessly, and ruthlessly, with metaphors for actual, factual, and historical violence to come. Think, for example, of those infamous four horsemen. Those riders on white, red, black, and green horses are all symbolic, to be sure, but they are symbols for conquest, war, famine, and pestilence, and such events’ promise realities, not more metaphors. Revelation’s promise of a bloodthirsty God and a blood-drenched Christ represents for me the creation of a second “coming” to negate the first and only “coming” of Christ; the fabrication of violent apocalypse to deny nonviolent incarnation; and the invention of Christ on a warhorse to erase the historical Jesus on a peace donkey. Jesus’s

numerous images from Revelation could be lifted from the book to justify these options. For example, John Dominic Crossan introduces his book on divine violence in the Bible by quoting the beautiful vision of New Jerusalem in Rev 21:2–5a and then interrupts himself, saying, “and yet . . . the problem is that you wade to that event through a sea of blood. I do not exaggerate. We are dealing with metaphors and symbols, of course, but they are metaphors of massacre and symbols of slaughter.”⁶⁵

Such violent imagery is an example of why any of the passages in the profusion of mutually-interpreting verbal threads running to Revelation from the Old Testament and within the book itself cannot be read in isolation and need to be read within the interpretive framework suggested by John’s literary style. Jacques Ellul’s comment on reading Revelation in general is particularly pertinent to the passages dealing with God’s wrath:

The Apocalypse must be read as a whole, of which each part takes its import by relation to the whole: in other words, the Apocalypse cannot be understood verse by verse. It matters little whether the symbolism of the two prophets or the dragon is deciphered, in itself, or even in a short sequence: each has its role in relation to the totality. And it is that, moreover, which makes possible the avoidance of the detail of figures that hide the forest. Each of the symbols is a tree of the forest, but it is a matter of grasping the forest as such.⁶⁶

Bauckham considers John’s violent imagery and states, “The distinctive feature of Revelation seems to be, not its repudiation of apocalyptic militarism, but its lavish use of militaristic *language* in a non-militaristic *sense*. In the eschatological destruction of evil in Revelation there is no place for real armed violence, but there is ample space for the imagery of armed violence.”⁶⁷ With this understanding, John’s

nonviolent resistance to evil is replaced by Christ’s violent slaughter of evildoers” (180–81).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁶ Jacques Ellul, *Apocalypse: The Book of Revelation*, trans. George W. Schreiner (New York: Seabury, 1977), 12.

⁶⁷ Bauckham, “The Book of Revelation as a Christian War Scroll,” *Neot* 22 (1988): 30–31 (emphasis original).

third use of the verbal thread of the rod of iron in the vision of Christ’s victory in 19:11–15 will be considered within the general theme of God’s wrath in Revelation.

Rev 19:15	
NA28	NRSV
καὶ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ ἐκπορεύεται ῥομφαία ὄξεϊα, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῇ πατάξῃ τὰ ἔθνη, καὶ αὐτὸς ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾶ, καὶ αὐτὸς πατεῖ τὴν ληνὸν τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς ὀργῆς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ παντοκράτορος,	From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

Prior to this verse, John uses imagery to identify the rider of the white horse as Christ in 19:11–12. Then, 19:13 begins with the phrase, *καὶ περιβεβλημένος ἱμάτιον βεβαμμένον αἵματι* / “He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood.” Various commentators note an allusion to the prophecy of God’s vengeance on Edom in Isa 63:1–6, and there is disagreement on whose blood is on the robe of the rider.⁶⁸ However, strong evidence is present that the blood is Christ’s own. Mitchell G. Reddish observes:

John has exhibited creative license throughout the Apocalypse when he borrows texts from the Hebrew Bible. He does not simply borrow ideas and images; he adapts them for his purposes. In the scene in the Apocalypse, in contrast to the Isaiah text, the blood is on the warrior’s robe *before* he engages in battle, thus lessening the likelihood that it is the blood of his enemies. A better understanding is to view the blood as Christ’s own blood. The bloodstained

⁶⁸ Beale states, “the stained garments symbolize God’s attribute of justice, which he will exercise in the coming judgment” (Beale, *Revelation*, 957), implying that the blood is of Christ’s enemies. Because of the strength of the allusion to the warrior image in Isa 63, Witherington also favors this interpretation. See Witherington, *Revelation*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 243.

garment is a reminder of the cross. Like the repeated description of the Lamb who was slaughtered (5:6, 9, 12; 13:8; see also 7:14; 12:11), the bloodstains serve as a reminder to the readers/hearers that the conquering Christ is also the suffering Christ, the Christ of the cross.⁶⁹

Additionally, Mulholland states that throughout the vision, “garments are related to the nature of the person who wears them,”⁷⁰ an “outer manifestation” of a person’s being.⁷¹ He adds, “This is significant in John’s vision. In the Roman world, persons were identified by their clothing. Only the emperor and patrician class could wear togas with purple, the equestrian class could wear red, and so on. A person’s clothing manifested to the world the nature of the person.”⁷² In the case of Christ’s robe dipped in blood, then, John is inverting the warrior image of Isa 63 with a rider whose cruciform nature is manifested in his blood-stained clothing.⁷³

In 19:15, prior to the mention of the rod of iron, John mentions that from Christ’s mouth “comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations,” and as is consistent in John’s five references to Christ’s sword, it is only ever described as coming from his mouth, never as being in his hand, alluding to the servant of the Lord in Isa 49:1–6⁷⁴ and indicating that the sword is his word rather than a weapon. Gorman notes, “This is the *modus operandi* of the Lamb: he comes on the white horse of victory bearing his own blood, reminding

⁶⁹ Mitchell G. Reddish, *Revelation*, Smith & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smith & Helwys, 2001), 367–68. Emphasis in original.

⁷⁰ Mulholland, *Revelation* (2011), 571–72.

⁷¹ Mulholland, *Revelation* (1990), 300.

⁷² Mulholland, *Revelation* (2011), 445.

⁷³ Koester notes the similarity between this inversion of images and that of the lion and lamb. He states, “Earlier, John heard that ‘the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Rood of David, has conquered’ (5:5). . . . What John saw, however, was that God kept the promise by sending the Lamb, who ‘conquered’ by faithful suffering and death (Rev. 5:6–10). A similarly surprising fulfillment takes place in the great battle. . . . What John now sees, however, is that the divine warrior is Christ, who wears garments soaked in his own blood, which was shed for the people of every nation (Rev. 5:9–10; 19:13). Christ can confront the nations because he has suffered for the nations” (*Revelation and the End of All Things*, 173).

⁷⁴ Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” 1143.

us that he will defeat the powers of evil as the Lamb, not with a sword in his hand but with a sword in his mouth.”⁷⁵

The image of the sword here intersects with the verbal thread of the rod of iron to invert not only these images but the expansive concept of God’s wrath. Mulholland comments,

The sharp sword, one of the initial attributes of Christ (1:16; cf. 2:12, 16), now is joined with the rod of iron with which Christ will strike the nations and shepherd them.... The nations will be shepherded by the iron rod of Christ’s sword. There is no flexibility in this image. God’s response to the rebellion is “spoken forth” in the death of Christ, and the rebellious realm is “shepherded” by that response.⁷⁶

The wrathful inflexibility of which Mulholland speaks in reference to the firmness of the iron rod is not indicating a lack of opportunity for repentance, but that “God’s unchanging reality is also an ‘iron rod,’ an image of unyielding, unbending strength and endurance.⁷⁷ All that is contrary to God’s order of wholeness and life will, ultimately, be shattered against the enduring reality of God.”⁷⁸ If one lives in opposition to the lamb, such an encounter is experienced as wrathful, even if it is the same dynamic that others experience as the comforting rod and staff of a shepherd. Mulholland characterizes Revelation’s description of God’s wrath:

As fallen Babylon begins to experience the destructive consequences of its rebellion against God, it attributes its torment to a vengeful, punitive, retributive wrathful deity.

⁷⁵ Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, 194.

⁷⁶ Mulholland, *Revelation* (1990), 301–2.

⁷⁷ Mulholland elsewhere describes the unyielding nature of God’s wrath with a comparison to the law of gravity: “By placing yourself in opposition to the law of gravity, you begin to experience the ‘wrath’ of gravity. This, in some measure, illustrates the holiness of God. God’s holiness is the context of our true wholeness, peace, joy, and stability. When we step away from holiness into unholiness, God doesn’t change. God continues to be holy, and we begin to experience the destructive consequences of our unholiness. Unholiness is its own torment” (*Revelation* [2011], 535–36).

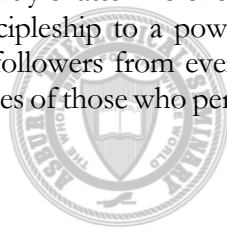
⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 573.

It is as though the wholeness of God is a sharp scalpel in the hand of a skilled and loving surgeon. As the surgeon seeks to cut through our flesh to the cancerous growth that is destroying us, we could easily perceive the surgeon as a spiteful, sadistic, ogre who is seeking to inflict pain and suffering upon us when, in reality, the surgeon, the scalpel, and the suffering they cause are all directed toward our healing and wholeness.⁷⁹

Summary and Conclusion

John's use of repetition and inversion of images throughout Revelation requires that readers allow each passage of Revelation to be informed by the rest of the book as well as the pool of images from the Old Testament, which John utilizes in practically every verse. John's repeated allusions to Ps 2, including three uses of the image of the rod of iron from Ps 2:9, indicate Revelation's content is informed by and reacting to eschatological militaristic messianism. The verbal thread of Revelation's references to the rod of iron and John's choice of the LXX verb in Ps 2 of ποιμαίνω/"to shepherd" provide a connection between eschatological militaristic messianism and the shock of John seeing a slaughtered lamb after he had heard about a lion. John's persistent imagery of the lamb then serves as the central interpretive image of the vision, allowing for reinterpretation of God's wrath that is more consistent with cruciform Christology than those provided by alternative interpretations of Revelation.

This carries critical implications for Christians, as discipleship to a messianic lion who will violently shatter his enemies will inherently be drastically different from discipleship to a powerful slaughtered lamb whose shepherding inspires followers from every nation yet is experienced as wrathful by the choices of those who persist in their opposition.



NOT TO BE USED WITHOUT COPYRIGHT PERMISSION
OF ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

⁷⁹ Ibid., 574.

Appendix: Verbal Thread Chart of Revelation’s Use of Psalm 2:9

				Christ as ἄρνιον/ lamb in Revelation
				Rev. 5:6
				Rev. 5:8
				Rev. 5:12
				Rev. 5:13
	Ps. 2:1/Rev. 11:18			Rev. 6:1
	Ps. 2:2/Rev. 11:15	Ps. 2:2/Rev. 12:10		Rev. 6:16
	Ps. 2:6/Rev. 14:1			Rev. 7:9
	Ps. 2:7/Rev. 2:18			Rev. 7:10
	Ps. 2:8/Rev. 2:26			Rev. 7:14
ῥάβδον σιδηρᾶ / rod of iron	Ps. 2:9/Rev. 2:27	Ps. 2:9/Rev. 12:5	Ps. 2:9/Rev. 19:15	Rev. 7:17 πομαῖνο / shepherd
				Rev. 12:11
				Rev. 13:8
				Rev. 14:1
				Rev. 14:4a
				Rev. 14:4b
				Rev. 14:10
				Rev. 15:3
				Rev. 17:14a
				Rev. 17:14b
				Rev. 19:7
				Rev. 19:9
				Rev. 21:9
				Rev. 21:14
				Rev. 21:22
				Rev. 21:23
				Rev. 21:27
				Rev. 22:1
				Rev. 22:3
* This is a partial list of the allusions to Ps. 2 noted in Richard Bauckham, <i>The Theology of the Book of Revelation</i> (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 69.				



NOT TO BE USED WITHOUT COPYRIGHT PERMISSION
OF ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



NOT TO BE USED WITHOUT COPYRIGHT PERMISSION
OF ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Ten Commandments or Prohibitions? Numbering the Ten Words

W. Creighton Marlowe
Evangelical Theological Faculty in Leuven, Belgium
creig.marlowe@etf.edu

Abstract: Exodus 34:28 established, ostensibly, that Moses recorded “Ten Words” (known as the Ten Commandments) revealed by *Yahweh*. What is in question is not how to number but how to *name* these Ten. Since Origen, different sets of ten commands have been proposed. Opposing Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant traditions exist. Logical, theological, and linguistic arguments have been offered as justifications for how to best divide the texts (Exod 20:3–17 and Deut 5:7–21) into two distinct commands and eight prohibitions. Most variations center on how to combine or split the several directives contained at the beginning and end, which respectively focus on idolatry and coveting. No consensus has been reached, although one list has become popular. Jewish exegesis includes a proposal for only nine. Some interpreters have proposed more than ten commands (12–14). Is a new approach possible? This article suggests there are ten clear prohibitions that leave aside the positive commands to keep Sabbath and honor parents. The proposal is made that these two could be seen as adjunctive to the prohibitions that precede, so do not function technically as two of the Ten negations intended.

Key terms: Decalogue, Ten Commandments, Ten Words, Two Tablets, law code, Sinai Covenant, Mosaic law

Exodus 34:28 says Moses inscribed “ten words” (עֲשֵׂוֹת הַדְּבָרִים), the “words of the covenant,” on the tablets (or “planks”), and that this occurred during a forty-day-and-night period when he was with *Yahweh*.¹ There were two “tablets”; however, *Yahweh* had previously stated

OF ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

¹ Also known as the “Decalogue” (from *deka logous* “ten words” in the Greek Septuagint, OT version).

that he would write on them (Exod 34:1).² Although the numbers “ten” and “twenty” in Hebrew share the same root consonants, no serious proposal has been made to date for textual emendation. What exactly was on the two tablets is debated. Some take the verse literally that only ten words were inscribed. How they were distributed is also a question (5 and 5 only being a logical deduction, but echoed by Gamaliel, while other sages proposed duplicate tablets, ten on each).³ Jewish artwork often displays two tablets with one word per command (suggestive of the remaining text) or using the first ten letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

The passages that contain these commands (Exod 20:3–17 and Deut 5:7–21) do not specify the number or enumerate them. That there were ten commands (whether words or statements) is clear. The question that remains is, how do we know how to arrange these texts into ten different topics. The traditional Christian⁴ or Jewish arrangements⁵ are not necessarily the biblical arrangement intended. Christian

² In Exodus 31:18 the two stone tablets of **הָעֵדוּת** (“the testimony; law; decree”) given to Moses by *Yahweh* had been inscribed by *Elohim’s* finger. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back, made by *Elohim* and written by *Elohim* (32:16). When Moses descended from the mountain and caught the Israelites worshipping a golden calf idol, he smashed these tablets (32:19). So, the tablets in chapter 34 are a second edition.

³ See Jacob Z. Lauterbach, 1933; rev., reprint ed.: *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael: A Critical Edition on the Basis of the Manuscripts and Early Editions with an English Translation, Introduction, and Notes* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1961). See also Tractate *de-ba-Hodesh* 5 in H. S. Horovitz and I. A. Rabin, ed., 1931; reprint ed.: *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael* (Jerusalem, Mekitze Nirdamim 1960), 233. In the ancient world, diplomatic treaties were duplicated for each party involved (see M. Margalot, “What was Written on the Two Tablets?” Lectures on the Torah Reading, Bar-Ilan University, July 2004 (<https://www.biu.ac.il/JH/Parasha/eng/kitisa/mar.html>. Accessed 22 Apr 2020).

⁴ According to Origen: 1. Not have any other gods. 2. Not make or worship any image of God. 3. Not lift the Lord’s name in vain. 4. Keep the Sabbath. 5. Honor father and mother. 6. Not kill (murder). 7. Not commit adultery. 8. Not steal. 9. Not give false testimony. 10. Not covet your neighbor’s wife, house, or possessions. But according to Augustine: 1. Not have any other gods. 2. Not lift the Lord’s name in vain. 3. Keep the Sabbath. 4. Honor father and mother. 5. Not kill (murder). 6. Not commit adultery. 7. Not steal. 8. Not give false testimony. 9. Not covet your neighbor’s wife. 10. Not covet neighbor’s possessions (<https://bible Scripture.net/Commandments.html>).

⁵ 1. I am *Yahweh* your God. 2. Not have any other gods. 3. Not lift the Lord’s name in vain. 4. Keep the Sabbath. 5. Honor father and mother. 6. Not kill (murder). 7. Not commit adultery. 8. Not steal. 9. Not give false testimony. 10. Not covet your

arrangements also differ between Catholics/Lutherans and Protestants.⁶ If any of these are correct, what proof is there? What about the nature of these biblical passages makes other arrangements possible? Actually, more than ten commands or directives appear in these passages. One Jewish tradition counted not ten but thirteen commands (e.g. *Sefer ha-Chinnukh*, thirteenth century).⁷ Which are the ten intended or that were delivered to Moses? As Sarna observed: “While these broad, basic divisions are clear and convincing, less obvious is the manner in which the number ten is attained.”⁸ Beale observed, “While Exodus 34:28 specifically identifies that there were 10 commandments, the precise division of the commandments is subject to interpretation.”⁹ Also Akin remarked, “This is a problem because there are actually [more] than ten imperative statements in the two relevant texts (Exod. 20:1–17; Deut. 5:6–21). One dispute concerning the Ten Commandments concerns how they are to be divided. We are told in Scripture that there are ten . . . but we are not told exactly how the text should be divided.”¹⁰

Textual Data

The oldest extant text of the Jewish Ten Commandments is a Hebrew manuscript from the Dead Sea scrolls (4Q41 or 4QDeutⁿ; dated

neighbor’s wife, house, or possessions (<https://bible.scripature.net/Commandments.html>). However, David Stern offers a slightly different order: 1. I am *Yahweh* your God, so do not have any other gods. 2. Not make or worship any image of God. 3. Not lift the Lord’s name in vain. 4. Keep the Sabbath. 5. Honor father and mother. 6. Not kill (murder). 7. Not commit adultery. 8. Not steal. 9. Not give false testimony. 10. Not covet your neighbor’s wife, house, or possessions.

⁶ Catholics/Lutherans combine verses 3–5 in Exodus, making the second command about the divine Name, and split the verses on coveting into two commands; whereas Protestants tend to split verses 3–5 into two commands (making misuse of the divine Name #3) and combine all the final ones about coveting.

⁷ Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 107.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁹ Matthew S. Beal, “Ten Commandments,” edited by John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016), n.p.

¹⁰ James Akin, “The Division of the Ten Commandments,” n.p. Accessed 08 Sep. 2020. <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/division-of-the-ten-commandments-1099>.

between 30–1 BC).¹¹ Nothing about this text informs us about how to distinguish the ten “words/statements.” We only have a tradition. Before the discoveries at Qumran the oldest Hebrew manuscript was the Nash Papyrus (150–100 BC; only 4 papyrus fragments), which contains the Decalogue. It was found in Egypt and likely used by Egyptian Jews. This version combines parts of the Exod 20 commands with those in Deut 5. Some similarities with the Septuagint have been noted, e.g. the same reversal of murder/adultery to adultery/murder.¹² The oldest known inscription is the Samaritan version, which dates several centuries later (AD 300–500), and is inscribed on a white marble slab 2 feet square and weighing about 200 pounds. The text has twenty lines in Samaritan script, but most interesting is that it only uses nine of the ten biblical commands. The command not to use God’s name lightly (“in vain”) is absent. Instead, the other nine have a tenth added about building a temple on Mount Gerizim (the Samaritan holy hill as distinct from Jewish Jerusalem or Mt. Zion).¹³ None of this (neither the Jewish Palestinian, Jewish Egyptian, nor Samaritan textual data) helps us determine how to accurately enumerate the Hebrew Ten Commandments; but these data do point to long-standing lack of clarity on the matter, which is illustrated by differing religious numbering traditions (previously detailed).

Jewish Tradition

A standard critical Hebrew Bible (*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*) reflects the Qumran text, only with the addition of vowels, accents, diacritics, and marginal notes. These notes do not comment on enumeration, but there is the placement of divisional symbolic consonants (in

¹¹ Daniel Estrin, “Oldest Complete Copy of Ten Commandments Goes on Display in Israel,” *The Times of Israel* 5 May 2015. www.timesofisrael.com. Accessed 20 Apr 2020; and Sidnie Ann White, “The All Souls Deuteronomy and the Decalogue,” *JBL* 109 (1990): 193–206.

¹² See e.g. Stanley A. Cook, “A Pre-Massoretic Biblical Papyrus,” *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 25 (1903): 34–56. See also William F. Albright, “A Biblical Fragment from the Maccabean Age: the Nash Papyrus,” *JBL* 56 (1937): 145–76.

¹³ See the account of Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman, who said to him, “I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem” (John 4:19–20; NIV). See also <https://www.history.com/news/oldest-known-inscription-of-10-commandments-goes-up-for-auction>.

Exodus 20) after verses 6 (*samek*), 7 (*pe*), 12 (*samek*), 13 (*samek*), 14 (*samek*), 15 (*samek*), 16 (*samek*), and 17 (*pe*). However, these represent editorial decisions long after the original composition. These data still are not irrelevant but are inconsistent. The Masoretic Text Decalogue in Exod 20:3–17) is divided into nine logical reading sections: vv. 3–6 (idolatry); v. 7 (blasphemy); vv. 8–11 (Sabbath); v. 12 (parents); v. 13 (murder); v. 14 (adultery); v. 15 (theft); v. 16 (false witness); v. 17 (coveting). Deuteronomy 5:7–21 has ten by dividing the coveting section with a marker: vv. 7–10 (idolatry); v. 11 (blasphemy); vv. 12–15 (Sabbath); v. 16 (parents); v. 17 (murder); v. 18 (adultery); v. 19 (theft); v. 20 (false witness); v. 21a (coveting); v. 21b (coveting). Nine more than ten are suggested if we base the numbering on these Masoretic punctuation indicators. Sarna categorizes the commands as five (all marked by “*Yahweh* your God”) and the next five lacking this designation.¹⁴

Regardless, these align with all traditions in separating commands or commands-with-commentary that end and begin at these breaks: vv. 6/7, 12/13, 13/14, 14/15, 15/16, and 16/17. But this only accounts for eight commands. Ten are achieved by having vv. 2–5 split into two commands: 1. Not have any other gods and 2. Not make or worship any image of God. This aligns with Stern’s Jewish order (n. 5 above) and would explain the basis for the Jewish enumeration. The alternative Jewish list noted in the same footnote (4) is questionable since its #1 is not a command at all. D. N. Freedman considers the scholarly consensus the same as Stern (see n. 5 above).¹⁵ While this favors major categories, apostasy and idolatry are somewhat interchangeable and are divided no more obviously than coveting women and possessions. Nothing in the Hebrew text make these categorical distinctions obligatory. Uniquely and oddly, the *Talmud* made the preface (“I am *Yhwh* your God”) the first command.¹⁶ In general, Jewish tradition has favored Exod 20:2 as an independent statement and vv. 3–4 as a combined unit.¹⁷

¹⁴ Sarna, *Exodus*, 108.

¹⁵ Apostasy; Idolatry; Blasphemy; Sabbath observance; Parental respect; Murder; Adultery; Stealing; False Testimony; Coveting. David Noel Freedman, “The Nine Commandments,” *Proceedings of the 36th Annual Convention of the Association of Jewish Libraries* (La Jolla, CA; June 24–27, 2001), 5.

¹⁶ See Daniel I. Block, “The Decalogue in the Hebrew Scriptures,” 1–27 in *The Decalogue Through the Centuries: From the Hebrew Scriptures to Benedict XVI*, ed. Jeffrey P. Greenman and Timothy Larsen (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 2012).

¹⁷ Sarna, *Exodus*, 108.

Other Church Traditions

As already indicated, Origen’s list (AD 184–253) differs from Augustine’s (AD 354–430). The Lutheran Small Catechism list is the same as Augustine (see n. 4 above) except that he reverses 9 and 10.¹⁸ This happens because the order differs between Exod 20:17 and Deut 5:21. The former has the order “not covet neighbor’s house, wife, or servants” whereas the latter has “not covet neighbor’s wife, house, land, or servants” (which order in the Hebrew of Deut 5, is the same as the coveting commands in the Septuagint/LXX of Exodus and Deuteronomy). Calvin’s order is the same as Origen’s (intentional or not; see n. 4 above).¹⁹ Philo’s list mirrors that of Origen except he reverses adultery and murder. He speaks of the first two as contra polytheism and then contra idolatry.²⁰ A Puritan who wrote a commentary on the Ten Commandments by that name (Thomas Watson, 1620–1686) listed them the same as Origen (see n. 3 above).²¹ A fairly recent book (2017) arranges the commands into two groups of five (theological and sociological) by including the one to honor parents in the first grouping about relating to God.²² This view was already noted by Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch (citing Josephus and Philo), who observed opposing ideas about the number of commands supposedly recorded on each of Moses’ two tablets. In addition to the balanced five-and-five approach (which includes honor for parents), others have supposed three-and-seven (the three being those comments about idolatry, then God’s Name, and then Sabbath), making no separation between having, making, bowing to, or serving idols. The Church fathers through

¹⁸ <https://catechism.cph.org/en/10-commandments.html>. Accessed 20 Apr 2020.

¹⁹ <http://www.johncalvinforeveryone.org/chapter-8-parts-1-5.html>. Accessed 20 Apr 2020.

²⁰ <http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philo/book26.html>. Accessed 20 Apr 2020. See also J. H. A. Hart, “Philo of Alexandria,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 17 (1904): 726–31. See a discussion about Philo’s delineation of the Mosaic Legislation for non-Jews by Emil Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1896), 219–20. (https://www.preteristarchive.com/Books/pdf/1890-96_schurer_history-of-the-jewish-people_D2-V3.pdf. Accessed 22 Apr 2020).

²¹ Thomas Watson, 1692, *The Ten Commandments*, rev. ed. 1890 (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995).

²² David L. Baker, *The Decalogue. Living as the People of God* (London: Apollos, 2017).

the fourth century were unanimous on the balanced 5/5 view, which is supported by the Eastern and Reformed churches. Augustine is credited with the origin of the 3/7 view, and quoted (in translation) as saying “the commandment against images is only a fuller explanation of that against other gods, but that the commandment not to covet is divided into two commandments by the repetition of the words, ‘*Thou shalt not covet.*’”²³ Respect for Augustine tended to cement this perception in the Western Church, so over time tradition put the brakes on critical revision. Luther agreed with one change, the same as Catholicism, that not coveting a neighbor’s house is the ninth command. Augustine followed the different order (than Exodus) in Deut 5, where not coveting another’s wife precedes coveting another’s house. Keil and Delitzsch sense that opposition to Christianity influenced the Jewish decision, among some, to take the introductory words (“I am YHWH your God”) as the first command, after which they combine the prohibitions against gods and images and all coveting into one.²⁴ Typical Reformed or Orthodox approaches find an initial four sacred and then six social laws. Numbering differs in relation to dividing or not the idolatry comments, using or not the introductory remarks as a command, and how to separate or not the statements about coveting.²⁵

More recently and typically, the command to honor mother and father has been viewed as belonging to those about human relationships (cf. the 5/5 and 3/7 view above). Other approaches could be exposed, but these represent the various contrasts in how the Ten Commandments have been numbered. Most confusion stems from the nature of the beginning (idolatry, other gods, etc.) and the ending

²³ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 392.

²⁴ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 392. In a footnote on this page they say, “It is adopted by *Gemar. Macc. f. 24 a; Targ. Jon.* on Ex. and Deut.; *Mechilta* on Ex. 20:15; *Pesikta* on Deut. 5:6; and the rabbinical commentators of the middle ages.” They explain as well that this numbering mode is found in *Julian Apostata* and Jerome (alluding to Hosea 10:10).

²⁵ See Beal, “Ten Commandments,” n.p.; John Barton, “The ‘Work of Human Hands’ (Psalm 115:4): Idolatry in the Old Testament,” 194–204 in *The Ten Commandments: The Reciprocity of Faithfulness*, edited by William P. Brown (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004); Ronald F. Youngblood, “Counting the Ten Commandments,” *BibR* 10:6 (Dec 1994): 30–35, 50, 52 (<http://www.bib-arch.org/brd94/counting.html>); and J. W. Marshall, “Decalogue,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, edited by D. W. Baker and T. D. Alexander (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), 172.

(coveting various categories of people and property). But there are a number of other aspects to the biblical texts that create even more questions and call for perhaps new ways of identifying the exact content of these Ten “Words.”

Commentaries

Although dated, Keil and Delitzsch remains a mainstay commentary for conservatives. Still, the commentary presents unique observations. On the question of the right way to number the commands, this commentary makes the argument that no view is automatically best due to priority in formation or majority in affirmation. The biblical text is the only basis for any authoritative answer, which this commentary claims eliminates Augustine’s approach. As an example, no difference exists in the coveting commands as does essentially between believing in other gods and bowing to them. I am not sure this is so clear cut. The exegetical basis for the claim, however, is based on instances of image worship (i.e., the golden calf at Sinai as well as Gideon [Judg 8:27]; Micah [Judg 17]; and Jeroboam [1 Kgs 12]). Formally, it is argued that only the first five attach justifications for their existence. The final five uniquely are each connected to the following command with the conjunction *waw*.²⁶ Much is said about the Masoretic markers for breaks in the text, but these, while well preserved, establish a reading tradition while, like added vowels, not having the same authority as the consonantal text (see Jewish Tradition, above). Keil and Delitzsch makes a good case for the 5/5 distribution, but still leaves some ambiguity over how to clearly identify the exact ten commands. A reasonable case is made for Apostasy; Idolatry; Blasphemy; Sabbath observance; Parental respect; Murder; Adultery; Stealing; False Testimony; Coveting.

J. A. Thompson (1974) divided the ten into the first four obligations (to God) and the following six (to fellow humans).²⁷ His order for the ten was (1) a general principle of total allegiance to God (Deut 5:7); (2) a prohibition of making a *Yahweh* idol (5:8–10; cf. Exod 20:4–6); (3) a prohibition against the careless use of the name *Yahweh* (5:11); (4) a positive prescription for Sabbath observance (5:12–15); (5) a

²⁶ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 393.

²⁷ J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, TOTC (London: Inter-Varsity, 1974), 114–18.

second positive prescription for parental honor (5:16);²⁸ and then a final five prohibitions that indicate respect for (6) life (5:17); (7) marriage (5:18); (8) property (5:19); (9) another's reputation (5:20); and then end with (10) a rejection of covetousness (5:21). Notably these last five were widely represented in the ANE law codes. For Thompson this is not a removal but recognition of their divine origin in the Hebrew Scripture., since they are built into the fabric of the moral universe.²⁹ P. C. Craigie (1976) followed the same order.³⁰ But he saw a 5/5 division between those laws about communion with God and those about fellowship in God's community.³¹ But neither Thompson nor Craigie were concerned with alternative identifications for naming or numbering the ten commands.

Recent commentaries hardly refer to the problem of identifying which commands account for the Ten intended. Durham makes no mention of different views on differing collections of the Ten. He does mention the issue of arrangement, but in terms of why this sequence was used.³² He recognizes these Ten as beyond question: *have no other gods, *do not worship them, *not misuse the Name *keep the Sabbath, *honor parents, *no murder, *no adultery, *no theft, *no false witness, and *do not covet.³³ This is the same tradition as Origen and others, including Ewald "undoubtedly."³⁴ Propp also has no interaction with the established debate. He does not number the commands but says "next command ... next ... final"; but he only lists nine regulations.³⁵ No solution to the debate is offered, but he does give evidence of the importance of the topic about identifying the Ten correctly. Unlike Durham, he has the prohibition against taking the Name

²⁸ Cf. negative (prohibitive) versions in Deut 27:16 and Exod 21:17.

²⁹ Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 118.

³⁰ (1) no idolatry (Deut 5:7); (2) no idols (vv. 8–10); (3) no blasphemy (v. 11); (4) observe Sabbath (vv. 12–15); (5) honor parents (v. 16); (6) no murder (v. 17); (7) no adultery (v. 18); (8) no theft (v. 19); (9) no false witness (v. 20); and (10) no coveting (v. 21). P. C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, NICOT, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 151–63.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 163–64.

³² John I. Durham, *Exodus*, WBC 3 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 282.

³³ *Ibid.*, 284–99.

³⁴ David L. Baker, "The Finger of God and the Forming of a Nation," *TynB* 56 (2005): 12.

³⁵ William H. C. Propp, *Exodus 19–40*, AB 2A (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 305–6.

in vain as the second rather than third. Coveting is the ninth and final one; but he says it really is not a command, rather the root of all unhappiness.³⁶ Stuart refers to N. Ararat’s observation that the Ten have traditionally been divided incorrectly. He saw the second command as not bowing down to idols. Ararat argued for five commands on each of two tablets. Stuart objects strongly arguing for ten on each (2 copies).³⁷ He lists the same Ten as Durham.³⁸ Jason S. DeRouchie argues for a modified version of the Catholic-Lutheran numbering and for Yahweh’s claim to be Israel’s redeemer as foundational not to the entire Decalogue but just to the first command. Deuteronomy 5 is thought to clarify the numbering of commands 5–10.³⁹ He thinks syntactical features combine all of the idolatry warnings but otherwise divide the rules on coveting. However, similar data could be used to support a distinction between the ten prohibitions and two exhortations (Sabbath and parents), suggesting the latter are not distinct Words.

The Biblical Texts

Exodus 20:3–17 (as Deut 5:7–21) contains 12 prohibitions (אִלֵּם+imperfect verb; you must not!”): you must not have other gods! (v. 3); you must not make an idol! (v. 4); you must not bow to them! And you must not worship, them! (v. 5; is this one or two commands?); you must not bear the name *Yahweh* frivolously! (v. 7); you must not perform (work!, on the Sabbath; v. 9); you must not murder! (v. 13); you must not commit adultery! (v. 14); you must not steal! (v. 15); you must not testify falsely! (v. 16); you must not desire your neighbor’s house! (v. 17a); you must not desire your neighbor’s wife, etc.! (v. 17b). In addition there are two positive commands (but only one imperative verb is used): to remember/observe the Sabbath (v. 8; functional

³⁶ Propp, *Exodus*, 304–8.

³⁷ On the matter of the tablets and arrangement, see David L. Baker, “Ten Commandments, Two Tablets: The Shape of the Decalogue,” *Them* 30:3 (Summer 2005), 8–9. Baker alludes to the naming of the Ten as a crucial question but does not try to answer it directly or in detail.

³⁸ Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, NAC 2 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 447–73, 449 n. 25.

³⁹ Jason S. DeRouchie, “Counting the Ten: An Investigation into the Numbering of the Decalogue,” 93–126, in *For Our Good Always: Studies on the Message and Influence of Deuteronomy in Honor of Daniel I. Block*, ed. by Jason S. DeRouchie, Jason Gile, and Kenneth J. Turner (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013).

impv.?) and honor your parents! (v. 12). Deuteronomy 5:15 uses the infinitive as well for “Remember you were slaves!” (not in the Exodus version). All this leads to 14–15 functional commands (only 13 actual formal ones).⁴⁰ But the OT specifies “ten.” Clearly the negations, then, count as commands as much as the literal imperatives. So on what basis do we derive eight commands out of the 12 prohibitions to add to the imperatives (formal or functional) in order to arrive at the Ten Commands that Exodus 34:28 had in mind?

Recognition also has occurred regarding several OT passages that show similarities with the Decalogue. Exodus 34:11–26 includes directions regarding Sabbath and devotion to Yahweh alone. Leviticus 19 contains allusions or citations from a majority of the Ten (exact number used depends on how the Ten are counted). Deuteronomy 27:15–26 involves curses that overlap the Ten in subject matter. Ezekiel 18:5–9 and 22:6–12 have remarks about idolatry, adultery, theft, parents, Sabbath, and murder. Most of the issues in the Decalogue are mentioned in Hosea 4:2 and 7:9. Some also find overlap with Psalms 15 and 24 as well as Isaiah 33:14–16. All are later than the Ten and influenced by their precedence. Parallels with the Egyptian Book of the Dead and a Babylonian ritual text have been noted.⁴¹

Ten Prohibitions

If we set aside the opening paragraph about false gods and the closing one about desire, then we are left with seven commands that everyone recognizes: (1) Not lift the Lord’s name in vain; (2) keep the Sabbath; (3) honor father and mother; (4) not kill (murder); (5) not

⁴⁰ (1) You must not have other gods alongside me! (20:3; 5:7); (2) You must not craft an idol! (20:4; 5:8); (3) You must not worship or serve [false gods]! (20:5; 5:9). Is this one or two commands? (4/5) You must not misuse the name YHWH! (20:7; 5:11); (5/6) Remember/Observe the Sabbath day to honor it! (20:8; 5:12); (6/7) You must not do any work! (20:10; 5:14); (7/8) Remember you were slaves! (5:15); (8/9) Honor your parents! (20:12; 5:16); (9/10) You must not murder! (20:13; 5:17); (10/11) You must not commit adultery! (20:14; 5:18; (11/12) You must not steal! (20:15; 5:19); (12/13) You must not testify falsely against your neighbor! (20:16; 5:20); (13/14) You must not covet your neighbor’s house or possessions! (20:17; 5:21b); (14/15) You must not covet your neighbor’s wife or possessions! (20:17; 5:21a)

⁴¹ See Baker, “Ten Commandments,” 17–19; Baker, “The Finger of God,” 21–24; and C. F. Burney, “A Theory of the Development of Israelite Religion in Early Times,” *JTS* 9 (1908): 350–52.

commit adultery; (6) not steal; and (7) not give false testimony. Now we need three more. The problem is that to do this we have to bifurcate either the opening or closing paragraph. But what evidence supports one over the other? Both have multiple but similar parts, so it makes just as much sense to divide one as the other. Any solution is artificial. Is there a way to be consistent and correct and end up with ten different commands? If we focus only on the actual and formal prohibitions we arrive at ten (if we allow the two in 20:5/5:9 to be redundant [bow = worship/serve]): (1) you must not have other gods! (2) you must not make an idol! (3) you must not bow to, or serve, them! (4) you must not bear the name *Yahweh* frivolously! (5) you must not murder! (6) you must not commit adultery! (7) you must not steal! (8) you must not testify falsely! (9) you must not desire your neighbor's house! And (10) you must not desire your neighbor's wife! This leaves out "you must not work on Sabbath!" but that is subordinate to the "Observe Sabbath!" command that, along with honoring parents, is not part of the main prohibitions. Perhaps Moses had in mind these Ten Prohibitions. All these could easily have been recorded as one "word" or expression (שָׁבָט + the imperfect). An alternative, to avoid the repetition in the coveting category, would be to allow for the command "you must not perform [work]" to function as a distinct category. Either way we have ten prohibitions.⁴² Although there would be twelve if each negation is counted. See Figure 1—Configurations of the Ten Words below.

⁴² Peter Leithart gets 12 by separating bow and worship and counting the prohibition against work on Sabbath ("Don't Do, Don't Desire," Patheos, Evangelical. Leithart, 1. Jan. 7, 2019. <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/leithart/2019/01/dont-do-dont-desire/>. Accessed 15 March 2020). I only saw this blog for the first time after I had written this present article. See also Akin, "The Division," n.p., who counted fourteen: 1 You shall have no other gods before me. 2 You shall not make for yourself a graven image. 3 You shall not bow down to them or serve them. 4 You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain. 5 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 6 Six days you shall labor. 7 In it [the seventh day] you shall not do any work. 8 Honor your father and your mother. 9 You shall not kill. 10 You shall not commit adultery. 11 You shall not steal. 12 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. 13 You shall not covet your neighbor's house. 14 You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

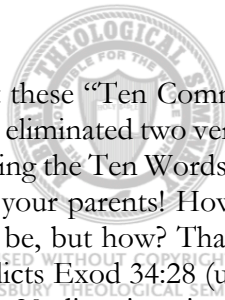
Figure 1—Configurations of the Ten Words

# of the commands			Formal Prohibitions (lō' + the imperfect)	Translation of Functional Imperatives	Typical #ing	Exod. Verses
1	1	1	<i>lō' yibyeḥ</i>	You must not have . . .	1	3
2	2	2	<i>lō' a'āśeḥ</i>	You must not make . . .		4
3	3/4	3	<i>lō' thištachveḥ</i> (/ / <i>lō' thā'ābdem</i>)	You must not bow/ You must not serve . . .	2	5a 5b
4	5	4	<i>lō' thiššā'</i>	You must not lift up (carry) . . .	3	7
<i>Positive command to honour Sabbath</i>					4	
---	---	5	<i>lō' thā'āśeḥ</i>	[You must not do (work) . . .]	----	10
<i>Positive command to honour parents</i>					5	
5	6	6	<i>lō' tirtzāch</i>	You must not murder	6	13
6	7	7	<i>lō' tin'āph</i>	You must not adulterate	7	14
7	8	8	<i>lō' tignōb</i>	You must not steal	8	15
8	9	9	<i>lō' thā'āneh</i>	You must not answer . . .	9	16
9	10	10	<i>lō' thachmōd</i>	You must not desire . . .	10	17a
10	(12)	(11)	<i>lō' thachmōd</i>	You must not desire . . .		17b

The typical order creates ten “commands” by adding the two positive commands honor of Sabbath and parents between the prohibition against misusing God’s Name and murder. But this approach has to substantiate the reason for separating or combining the 3 or 4 prohibitions related to idolatry. What requires a separation between having other gods and making images but a combination of bowing and serving? Could not all 3 or 4 statements be combined as anti-idolatry? The traditional divisions seem subjective and inconsistent.

Two Imperatives

Having arrived at these “Ten Commands” still leaves us with the problem that we have eliminated two very important imperatives in the history of understanding the Ten Words of *Yahweh* to Moses: Keep the Sabbath! and Honor your parents! How can these reasonably not be included? They must be, but how? That would lead to 12 commandments, which contradicts Exod 34:28 (unless “ten” is incorrect there). It is possible to find 20 directives in these passages (combining all stated and implied prohibitions plus positive commands/imper-



atives).⁴³ Since we have no textual variants to suggest twenty instead of ten, the best solution is to find how the two imperatives (one formal and one functional) can fit with the Ten Prohibitions.⁴⁴ The solution may be that these two commands function as subordinate aspects of the prohibition against misusing the name *Yahweh*.

A fly in the ointment of this study and what it might imply, is Jesus' words in Matt 19:18–19. After Jesus told an inquirer he needed to keep the command to obtain “eternal” life, whatever that meant,⁴⁵ he asked “which ones?” (19:18a). Jesus replied, “Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as yourself” (19:18b–19; NIV). He named four of the prohibitions, plus one of the two positive commands (all related to human interaction), and ended by tagging on Leviticus 19:18b (also about responsibility for humans, i.e. neighbors). So, six commands in all, but only the last is not part of the Sinai

⁴³ You must not put other gods before Me! (20:3); You must not make graven images of created objects above! (20:4a); [You must not make graven images] of created objects below! (20:4b); You must not worship false gods! (20:5a); [You must not] serve [false gods]! (20:5b); You must not bear My name YHWH in an empty manner! (20:7); [You must] Remember the Sabbath! (20:8); You must not work on the seventh day! (20:11)[You must] Honor your parents! (20:12); You must not murder! (20:13); You must not commit adultery! (20:14); You must not steal! (20:15); You must not testify falsely against your neighbor! (20:16); You must not covet your neighbor's house! (20:17); You must not covet your neighbor's wife! (20:17); [You must not covet your neighbor's] male servants! (20:17a); [You must not covet your neighbor's] female servants! (20:17b); [You must not covet your neighbor's] oxen! (20:17c); [You must not covet your neighbor's] donkey! (20:17d); [You must not covet your neighbor's] possessions! (20:17e).

⁴⁴ Exodus 20:8 uses an infinitive (absolute) verb “to remember” (זָכוֹר) while Deut 5:12 has the infinitive (also abs.) for “keep/observe” (שָׁמֹר). Deuteronomy 5:15 uses an *inverted* completed-action (or past tense) verb (perfect/*qatal*) for “remember” (same word as in Exod 20:8). In this case the *waw conversive* is prefixed, making it function in the future tense (sometimes called the “prophetic perfect” or more recently “perfect of certitude” is preferred). All of these are presented in English versions ostensibly as imperatives. The infinitive absolute in classical Hebrew syntactically can function as an imperative (see e.g. 2 Kgs 5:10; Isa 14:31). In Deut 5:15, the “perfect of certitude” creates the sense “then you will remember,” so not necessarily a command. See Ronald J. Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, 3rd ed., rev. John C. Beckman (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 68, 87.

⁴⁵ It might be questioned if this common English rendering as used today really conforms to how the corresponding Greek word was understood at that time. Did it really mean unending time (quantitative), or did it have more the sense of a quality of existence?

Commands (Exod 20; Deut 5). Remarkably, Jesus did not include any command about service to, or love of, God. Perhaps he intended the first five as a summary of the “Ten”; but clearly, in light of the Leviticus text, he wanted to stress that the life the man wants is essentially connected to loving neighbors. The man claimed he had kept the commands, but seems to have sensed that Jesus was not impressed, so asked what else he must do (v. 20). Jesus knew he was wealthy so pressed further on his “love of neighbor” record by telling him, to complete the task, he must sell his possessions and give to the poor and follow Jesus (v. 21). Then Matthew tells us he walked away sad due to his great wealth (v. 22). What is most relevant here, for the present study of Ten Commandments, is that Jesus mixes one of the positive commands with the prohibitions. This suggests if we asked Jesus to name the Ten, he would count honoring the Sabbath and parents as two of them. However, Matt 19 does not specify that the so-called Ten Commandments were part of the discussion or thinking. It could be that Jesus just selected five that dealt with love of fellow humans; and if he was responding to a request based on the Ten, we would wonder why he included the Leviticus text. Jesus appears just to be responding to “which commands?” as open to any directives of the Law or Torah. After all, “Ten Commandments” are never recognized in the New Testament (but does appear three times in the OT; see Exod 34:28; Deut 4:13; 10:4).

So, is it possible the claim of Ten Words has to do with Ten Prohibitions? None of these uses a formal imperative verb but is functionally imperative since there is no imperative form for a prohibition, but the indicative verb is used with a negation for the sense “You must not do x!” Since what is claimed is the prescription of ten “words” or “statements,” then actual, formal “commands” (i.e. imperative verbs) are not in view. The rest of these passages contains directives but utilizing morphologically imperative verbs (e.g. כָּבֵד “Honor!” in 20:12). And there are only two of these: respecting or honoring the Sabbath and parents (20:8, 12). Is it possible that these two play a supportive role to the ten prohibitions? Seventy of the 172 words in Exod 20:2–17 are accounted for by these two commands, so perhaps this section (vv. 8–12) is supplementary or complimentary. Both could be seen as an extension of the prohibition not to treat YHWH’s name or reputation lightly (20:7). The command to give due significance to the Sabbath and parents continues the theme of maintaining God’s

uniqueness and worth by not failing to give recognition to his reputation or character (which his name reflects).⁴⁶ To not bear God's character in vain is to not downplay his significance or essential worth as God. To "honor" (כבוד) parents is to give them the worth they are due. The verb כבוד has to do with giving due weight or value to someone or something. The noun form is used for God's "glory." To "remember" the Sabbath in order to maintain its uniqueness or distinction ("holiness"; קדש) is to protect or preserve its value or significance. Perhaps these two contextually unusual commands about maintaining reverence and respect for Sabbath and parents were added to compliment the prohibition against making light of God's character, the 4th or 5th of Ten Prohibitions.

⁴⁶ The traditional "do not take the name of the LORD your God in vain" is very misleading. The Hebrew text actually prohibits "bearing" or "carrying" lightly the name *that is* YHWH; see Carmen J. Imes, *Bearing God's Name: Why Sinai Still Matters* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), who argues the command "do not take the LORD's name in vain" is misunderstood and mistranslated. The popular translation makes it sound as if the readers has to ask, "What is the name of the LORD?" "LORD" is merely a symbol for the Hebrew YHWH. The expression "name of YHWH" is yet another construct genitive and in this case is appositional as to syntax, so the meaning is "name *that is* YHWH" (not possessive, name that belongs to YHWH). The name bears his nature, but what it means has been lost since the time when the Jews decided to erase the memory and evidence of how the name was spelled. The NIV's "not misuse the name" also misses the point, which has nothing to do with speaking the Name in some off-color manner. God's Name was given to Israel to be used since it reminded them of his essential character. God expected this Name to be used frequently but not abused. Ironically the greatest abuse possible would be to stop using it. This is like deciding never to eat in order to prevent obesity. The cure is worse than the disease. Regardless, we now no longer understand for sure what God's Name YHWH signifies, which diminishes his fame or reputation or value. In light of God's order to Moses to say that "I Am" sent him to Pharaoh (Exod 3:14; יהיה), and since the verb "to be" in Hebrew is HYH (or HWH), then the Name possibly is a prefix pronoun Y followed by HWH, meaning "he is" or "he will be" (although Exod 3:14 has "I am" or "I will be"). If true, then God's Name reflects his essential nature as Being or eternally existent, The Eternal One. This is attractive as a solution since God's self-existence or distinction or independence as Creator from creation and all that is temporal and earthly is what makes him God. He is not created or part of the creation and dependent on nothing outside himself. This is the kind of significance we would expect his Name to reflect. But we do not know for sure how to pronounce or spell or explain it because these data have been lost due to neurotic piety. See Austin D. Surls, "Making Sense of the Divine Name in the Book of Exodus: From Etymology to. Literary Onomastics," PhD Dissertation, Wheaton College, 2015.

Conclusion

The problem, nevertheless, is that leaving aside the two positive commands leaves us with only two ways to have ten; but both of these require splitting a topic (either the command[s] about idolatry or about coveting). Breaking up these categories seems artificial, but if we keep them both consolidated, we end up with only nine commands, unless we add back in the two positive ones, and then we have eleven. As the chart above indicates, the most reasonable way to have ten commands, and use the two positive ones, is to combine having and making gods (Exod 20:3–4) while dividing this from worshiping them (v. 5). While this requires combining two seemingly different actions in v. 5, they are arguably overlapping as much or more than having/making idols and desiring various possessions. This is the most consistent way to include the two positive commands and arrive at ten basically distinct topics (the only caveat being the separation of idolatry prohibitions for the obtaining of, or obeisance to, idols). In practice, however, over time, interpreters have differed over how to combine or separate the 3–4 different commands connected to idolatry in the opening verses of the Ten Commandments passages (Exod 20:3–5; Deut 5:7–9). Otherwise, we have to separate out one command from the idolatry or coveting categories, yet that is inconsistent and artificial. Related to this are the long-standing interpretive conflicts over how to number the prohibitions in the final section about coveting. An alternative is to recognize ten distinct prohibitions and accept the two positive commands as supportive and extended narrations. We have no compelling evidence for which topics to choose and then where to make the splits. Keil and Delitzsch notwithstanding, in the end, how exactly to isolate the ten “words” as intended, remains uncertain if not elusive. Exodus 34:28 compels us to have ten commandments, but “which ten?” is a question that still lacks a definitive and completely satisfactory solution. That the debate is longstanding and recent commentators do not engage it is curious. Since the biblical texts do not make any clear division of the Ten, new options challenging what has become traditional are warranted. Origen’s numbering has become popular, but what proves it? Perhaps the ten prohibitions are what the author had in mind who specified Ten Words (Exod 34:28).



NOT TO BE USED WITHOUT COPYRIGHT PERMISSION
OF ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Paul's Eschatological Joy in Philippians in Its Jewish Background

Shishou Chen
Asbury Theological Seminary
shishou.chen@asburyseminary.edu

Abstract: Jewish literature regarding eschatology is one of the backgrounds for Paul's eschatological joy in Philippians. While the OT emphasizes the future joy of a national eschatology, and the Pseudepigrapha develops the moral element, Paul presents a unique triangular concept of eschatological joy between him, the Philippians, and God, emphasizing the communal aspect within believers. His focus shifts from national and moral joy in the Jewish literature to Christ/mission-centered joy. In his already-not-yet eschatological framework, Paul smoothly connects the present joy with the future joy, which is a sharp distinction in the OT, stressing that joy is possible and obligatory for the present, even during suffering.

Key terms: Jewish Eschatology, Philippians, Joy, Intertestamental Judaism, Resurrection, Friendship

Academic interest in the study of emotions, especially grief and joy, has grown considerably in recent years. For example, Stephen Barton analyzes the grief and the therapy Paul offers in 1 Thess 4:13–18 (the eschatological resurrection) through social-scientific perspectives.¹ From the perspective of the Greco-Roman background, Robert Webber insists that some occurrences of the verb *χαίρω* in Paul's letters are "to be understood initially as adaptations of a Hellenistic epistolary convention expressing joy upon receipt of a letter or upon hearing good news from or about the addressee(s)."²

¹ Stephen C. Barton, "Eschatology and the Emotions in Early Christianity," *JBL* 130 (2011): 591.

² Robert Duff Webber, "The Concept of Rejoicing in Paul" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1970), 100.

Joy is a “leitmotif” of Philippians,³ and scholars have recognized the concept of joy and an eschatological framework as two major themes throughout Philippians, but they often deal with them separately, neglecting the intrinsic connection between them.⁴ Therefore, this article will explore Paul’s eschatological joy in Philippians, especially from the background of Jewish eschatology. I will first introduce my methodology, which combines a study of Jewish literature on eschatology and an Inductive Bible Study (IBS) on Philippians. Second, I will provide a brief summary of Jewish eschatology. Third, I will do an IBS study on two key passages (1:3–8; 4:1–7) that include a direct connection between eschatology and joy.

Methodology

Scholars have noticed the connection between Paul and Jewish literature regarding eschatology, including both continuity and discontinuity. For example, by comparing Philo and Paul, Thomas Tobin finds that eschatological images and language are common to both early Judaism and early Christianity. They are used to express hopes and fears about the future, especially a future with a certain finality about it. Based on a common heritage, they develop their unique characteristics.⁵ Manfred Brauch studies the influence of the Wisdom of Solomon on Paul. “Its duality of individual and corporate eschatological elements provides an adequate interpretative key for an understanding of the complex Pauline eschatology.”⁶ Therefore, this article will summarize key elements of Jewish eschatology in the OT, the Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Philo, and Josephus, especially the writings that connect eschatology to joy. Jewish eschatology provides a background for Paul’s eschatological joy in Philippians.

³ Joy (χαρά): 1:4, 25; 2:2, 29; 4:1; rejoice (χαίρω): 1:18 (x2); 2:17, 18, 28; 3:1; 4:4 (x2), 10; share joy with (συγχαίρω): 2:17, 18. Gordon D. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 52. A general history of the interpretation of Philippians, see Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, 2nd ed., BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 26–34.

⁴ For example, Charles B. Cousar, *Philippians and Philemon: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 19–20; Fee, *Philippians*, 50–53.

⁵ Thomas H. Tobin, “Reconfiguring Eschatological Imagery: The Examples of Philo of Alexandria and Paul of Tarsus,” *SPhilo.A* 28 (2016): 351.

⁶ Manfred Brauch, “Pauline Eschatology and the Wisdom of Solomon” (PhD diss., McMaster University, 1972), 336.

Then this article will do an IBS study on the eschatological joy in Philippians. IBS assumes the literary integrity of biblical books.⁷ Scholars have proven the integrity of Philippians from various perspectives, including oral composition and culture, epistolary literature, linguistics, and discourse analysis.⁸ With the whole letter in mind, my study will focus on 1:3–8 and 4:1–7, two key passages that directly connect eschatology and joy. In his thanksgiving, Paul expresses his joy in his prayer (1:4) because of the Philippians' partnership in the gospel (1:5) and an eschatological hope that God will perfect (ἐπιτελέω) His good work until the day of Jesus Christ (ἄχρι ἡμέρας Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, 1:6). In 4:1, Paul views the Philippians as his joy and eschatological crown (4:1). Later, Paul instructs them to rejoice always, for the Lord is near (ὁ κύριος ἐγγύς, 4:5). There is debate regarding 1:19–26, where Paul expresses his joy because he knows his deliverance (σωτηρίαν) through the prayers of the Philippians and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (1:19). Hawthorne and Martin view it as Paul's release from prison.⁹ Cousar and O'Brien view it as God's vindication of Paul's "defense and confirmation of the gospel" (1:7, 16).¹⁰ Paul Holloway understands it to refer to Paul's final salvation.¹¹ Although in the Pauline epistles, leaving this passage out of consideration for the moment, the noun σωτηρία always means "salvation," including two other occurrences in Philippians (Rom 1:16; 10:1, 10; 11:11; 13:11; 2 Cor 1:6; 6:2;

⁷ David R. Bauer and Robert A. Traina, *Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 63.

⁸ Casey Wayne Davis, *Oral Biblical Criticism: The Influence of the Principles of Orality on the Literary Structure of Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, JSNT 172 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999); Victor P. Furnish, "The Place and Purpose of Philippians III," *NTS* 10 (1963): 80–88; David E. Garland, "The Composition and Unity of Philippians: Some Neglected Literary Factors," *Nov T* 27 (1985): 141–73; Veronica Koperski, "Textlinguistics and the Integrity of Philippians: A Critique of Wolfgang Schenk's Arguments for a Compilation Hypothesis," *ETL* 68 (1992): 331–67; Jeffrey T. Reed, *A Discourse Analysis of Philippians: Method and Rhetoric in the Debate over Literary Integrity*, JSNTSup 136 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997).

⁹ Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians*, WBC 43 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 49.

¹⁰ Cousar, *Philippians and Philemon*, 37–38; Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 108–9.

¹¹ Paul A. Holloway, *Philippians: A Commentary*, Hermenia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 93. He gives a list of the scholars who agree this view in footnote 9.

7:10; Eph 1:13; Phil 1:28; 2:12; Thess 5:8, 9; 2 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 2:10; 3:15), semantically it could mean deliverance in a physical sense (Luke 1:71; Acts 27:34; Heb 11:7).¹² Several commentators have noticed the verbatim quotation from Job 13:16 (LXX), where σωτηρία for Job means “I know that I will be vindicated” (v. 18).¹³ Therefore, this article will focus on the two more obvious passages.

Jewish Eschatology

Eschatology in the OT

In contrast to the diversity of eschatology in the Pseudepigrapha, the eschatology in the OT is more coherent. Donald E. Gowan depicts six major themes of OT eschatology represented by Zech 8: Israel’s restoration to the promised land (8:7–8); no mention of the king; the nations’ seeking the Lord (8:20–23); Zion as the center (8:3); peace and joy (8:4–5); and material blessings (8:12).¹⁴ The following is a brief summary of the eschatological hope in the OT.

First, there is a sharp distinction between the present and future age. Old Testament eschatology is a comprehensive hope of God’s future salvation, especially from the present suffering of Israel, such as captivity and oppression of the enemies (Zech 10:9–11; Jer 38:10; Isa 55:11–12; Zeph 3:15–20). It presents a dichotomous schema between the present age and the age to come.¹⁵

Second, as Zech 8 shows, the emphasis of eschatology is almost always national rather than personal or cosmic. “Concern for the fate of the individual after death, which has tended to dominate Christian eschatology, is almost completely missing from the OT.”¹⁶ “The eschatological Zion is thus widely distributed in the prophetic literature, with a heavy concentration in Isaiah (2:3; 4:3; 10:12; 12:6; 18:7; 37:32) and Zechariah (1:17; 2:10; 8:3; 9:9, 13) and a relatively small number

¹² BDAG, 985–86.

¹³ Fee, *Philippians*, 130; O’Brien, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 108–9; Cousar, *Philippians and Philemon*, 37–38.

¹⁴ Donald E. Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament* (London: Continuum International, 2000), 5.

¹⁵ James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 464.

¹⁶ Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 122.

of references in Jeremiah (3:14; 4:6; 26:18; 50:5) and Ezekiel.”¹⁷ The nations will come to the Lord, but Israel still stands at the center stage (Zech 8:22).

Third, there is a moral element in eschatology. “Although it is God alone who brings the eschatological hope, it does not call for a completely passive drift into the divinely wrought paradise. The emphasis on obedience in the OT portraits of the ideal future shows that at no time does the OT conceive of human beings without responsibility.”¹⁸ God will judge the whole earth (Ps 95:10–13). While joy is a gift for the righteous, there is no joy for the impious (Isa 48:22; 57:21) or those who disobey God (Isa 66:14). The enemies will be punished (Zech 9:10; 10:11).

Fourth, the eschatological blessing is mainly material, such as grain and wine and fruit and cattle and sheep (Jer 38:12). In general, OT eschatology is “a worldly hope” that “does not scorn, ignore, or abandon the kind of life which human beings experience in this world in favor of speculation concerning some other, better place or form of existence.”¹⁹

Fifth, although these appear seldomly, there are some prophecies of the king. Zech 9:9–10 mentions a coming king by picking up on the language of the new king from the eighth-century prophets (Isa 9:6–7; 11:1–5 and Mic 5:2–4), the New Year festival (Ps 72:1–11; 89:38–45), and the promise to Judah (Gen 49:10–11). The new king will destroy every implement and semblance of war. The new king will rule from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth.”²⁰

Sixth, some passages mention the hope of resurrection. Isa. 26:19 reads: “Thy dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For thy dew is a dew of light, and on the land of the shades thou wilt let it fall.” As Gowan puts it, “Here is a clear reference to the resurrection of the body. It is not universal resurrection, for it speaks of ‘thy dead,’ and nothing of judgment; just

¹⁷ Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 9.

¹⁸ Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 122.

¹⁹ Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 122.

²⁰ Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, WBC 32 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 256–57. He continues, “No doubt this passage had a great influence on Jesus. He seems to have deliberately modeled his ‘triumphal entry’ into Jerusalem according to its outline. The peaceful and universal reign of God was his goal.”

rejoicing at a new life is mentioned.”²¹

Finally, seventh, the emotional effect of God’s eschatological salvation is rejoicing. Experience of future salvation becomes the reason for future rejoicing (Zech 10:6–7; Jer 38:13), a theme that is especially prominent in the eschatological hope of Isaiah, but it appears elsewhere as well (Jer. 31:13).²² The expression “rejoice in the Lord (Zech 10:8)” indicates that the OT eschatology understands “the future to be completely in the hands of God. The basis for hope in the OT is not faith in human progress, but the assurance of a coming divine intervention that will introduce a new thing that people have failed and will fail to accomplish.”²³

Eschatology in the Pseudepigrapha

The Pseudepigrapha presents diverse eschatology, and “many eschatological texts serve as consolation, moral or theological exhortation, and explanations about the nature of the world.”²⁴ The characteristics of their eschatology indicate both continuity and discontinuity with the OT. First, like the OT, there is a sharp distinction between the present and the eschaton, between heaven and “this world” (2 En. 42:3). All handmade works will fall in a flame of fire (*Sib. Or.* 3:618), but there will be a paradise for the righteous, all of whom will live there in joy (2 En. 43:5; LAE 13:2). Fourth Ezra 7:92–98 describes “seven orders,” which scholars have connected to the notion of an ascent through seven heavens.²⁵ Accompanied by peace and joy is the eternal light (2 En. 42:5; 43:6; Ques. Ezra 3), which proved to be one of the most useful symbols for God.²⁶ There is an expectation of full joy (2 Bar. 14:14).

Second, the Pseudepigrapha also presents a moral distinction between the wicked and the righteous (1 En. 10:12–20). The final judgment repeatedly appears in their eschatology, and the Messiah’s

²¹ Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 92.

²² Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 88.

²³ Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 122.

²⁴ Jenny R. Labendz, “Rabbinic Eschatology,” *JQR* 107 (2017): 293.

²⁵ Karina Martin Hogan, “4 Ezra,” *Outside the Bible: Ancient Jewish Writings Related to Scripture: Commentary*, ed. Louis H. Feldman, James L. Kugel, and Lawrence H. Schiffman (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2013), 2:1635.

²⁶ Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 112.

function is primarily judicial (4 Ezra 12:33; cf. 13:37–38).²⁷ Great joy and eternal light have been prepared for the righteous, but the outer darkness and the eternal fire have been prepared for the sinners (Ques. Ezra 3). The moral requirement includes revering the name of the LORD, serving in front of God's face (2 En. 42:6), carrying out righteous judgment (2 En. 43:7), observance of the law (*Sib. Or.* 3:580, 769, 775), honoring God and forgetting idols (*Sib. Or.* 12:290), and overcoming evil (4 Ezra 7:92). Yet they also recognize the sinfulness of human beings: "Lord, who of the living has not sinned against God? Have mercy upon us sinners who have been occupied and have been seized by Satan" (Ques. Ezra 7). In order to live a righteous life, they must endure suffering (4 Ezra 7:89–90), even martyrdom (Ques. Ezra 6).

Third, the Pseudepigrapha has a stronger emphasis on cosmic eschatology than the OT. In the Testament of Levi (25:3), the eschatological vision concerns both Jacob and all peoples. The Lord will be the King of the whole world, and strikingly, "the gentiles shall eat with them" (3 En. 48A:10; *Sib. Or.* 3:618).

Fourth, eschatological blessings are both material and spiritual. The righteous will inherit the earth (1 En. 5:7), such as cities and rich fields (*Sib. Or.* 3:581, 620), and enjoy long life (1 En. 5:10).²⁸ But in the Testament of Job (26:3; 33:1–9; 36:3; 40:3), material possessions are contrasted with the truly great wealth of God's eternal kingdom, a similar idea found in the Jesus tradition (Matt 6:19–21).²⁹ The righteous will be given Scripture, truth, and wisdom (1 En. 104:13; *Sib. Or.* 3:584–85); wisdom is a gift that will prevent sin in the final era (1 En. 51:3; cf. LAE, 13:2).³⁰

Fifth, the Pseudepigrapha develops the idea of the Messiah. The Messiah will appear to bring salvation, and God's people will enjoy the fellowship with Him, eating with Him (3 En. 48A:10). The Testament of Levi (18:2–3) depicts a priest-king: "Then the LORD will raise up a new priest, to whom all the words of the LORD will be revealed. And

²⁷ Hogan, "4 Ezra," 2:1655.

²⁸ The future age will be free of sin, but not of death. The righteous will have happy but finite life spans. Miryam T. Brand, "1 Enoch," in Feldman, Kugel, and Schiffman, *Outside the Bible*, 2:1367.

²⁹ Joan E. Taylor and David M. Hay, *Philo of Alexandria On the Contemplative Life: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series 7 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 147.

³⁰ Brand, "1 Enoch." 2:1367.

his star will arise in heaven like a king's." It is truly a pre-Christian prediction of the coming of the Messiah—a priestly Messiah as implied in a number of texts from Qumran.³¹

Sixth, there is a clearer hope of resurrection. The individual's destiny was gradually explained by more and more Jews in terms of belief in the resurrection of the body after death (notably in 2 Maccabees and the Psalms of Solomon).³² 1 Enoch indicates that everyone will be resurrected, but only the righteous will subsequently be chosen and "saved" (51:1–2; cf. LAE 13:2). In other references to resurrection in the Parables, however, only the righteous are resurrected (62:15–16; cf. Jub. 23).³³ 4 Ezra 7:88 declares, "they shall be separated from their mortal body," implying that the soul is the real person and the body its container, and the resurrection of the body will precede the judgment (7:32).³⁴

Finally, seventh, eschatology also involves a relational aspect, both with the Messiah and with other people. 4 Enoch (48A:10) depicts an eschatological feast where God's people will eat with the Messiah, and the gentiles shall eat with them. 2 Enoch (42:4) uses the language of friendship for this eschatological fellowship:

When the last one arrives, he will bring out Adam, together with the ancestors; and he will bring them in there, so that they may be filled with joy; just as a person invites his best friends to have dinner with him and they arrive with joy, and they talk together in front of that man's palace, waiting with joyful anticipation to have dinner with delightful enjoyments and riches that cannot be measured, and joy and happiness in eternal light and life.

Eschatology in the Dead Sea Scrolls

The eschatology of the Dead Sea Scrolls was influenced by 1 Enoch and Daniel.³⁵ First, the final judgment will happen on a

³¹ James L. Kugel, "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," in Feldman, Kugel, and Schiffman, *Outside the Bible*, 2:1746.

³² James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha & the New Testament* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 68.

³³ Brand, "1 Enoch," 2:1393.

³⁴ Hogan, "4 Ezra," 2:1634.

³⁵ Phillip Davies, "Death, Resurrection, and Life after Death in the Qumran

determined day (1QM 1:10). “In the apocalyptic perspective of the scroll, all events are parts of a divine plan, every detail of which has been prearranged to culminate on that day. In the midst of turmoil, this view inspires security and hope in the faithful.”³⁶ The judgment will distinguish between sons of light and sons of darkness (1QM 1:8). “The struggle between light and darkness is symbolic of the battle between righteousness and wickedness (cf. 1QM 1:6) that is part of God’s mysterious plan.”³⁷

Second, there will be no evil in the eschaton. Evil will finally be defeated, and good will prevail for eternity. The righteous can expect an eternity of light, peace, and joy, together with the inhabitants of heaven. They will be endowed with “the glory of Adam” (1QH 4:15; 1QS 4:23).³⁸

Third, bodily resurrection is implied. There is no explicit statement of a doctrine of the resurrection and no consensus about the precise nature of the final state of the righteous who “will acquire eternal life” (CD 3:20). However, the concept of a final judgment and the reward for the righteous, such as “eternal peace” (1QS 1:4), “eternal goodness” (1QS4:3), and “eternal enjoyment with endless life” (1QS 4:7), indicates that these rewards would be enjoyed in a renewed body.³⁹

Fourth, the Dead Sea Scrolls emphasize joyful worship: “Day after day they will proclaim together, with a joyous voice” (1QH 19:25; 4Q27, *Frag.* 1:6–7). Jeffrey L. Rubenstein finds a connection between this eschatological worship with the feast of Sukkot:

During the period of relative stability in the fourth and third centuries BCE the temple cult flourished. Sukkot again became the main pilgrimage and primary temple festival and retained this status until the destruction in 70 CE. The prophet of Zech 14 already pictures worship in the eschatological temple as a Sukkot celebration. Likewise,

Scrolls,” in *Judaism in Late Antiquity: Death, Life-after-Death, Resurrection and the World-to-Come in the Judaisms of Antiquity*, ed. Jacob Neusner and Alan J. Avery-Peck (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 210.

³⁶ Jean Duhaime, “War Scroll,” in Feldman, Kugel, and Schiffman, *Outside the Bible*, 3:3122.

³⁷ Duhaime, “War Scroll,” 3:3121–22.

³⁸ Davies, “Death, Resurrection, and Life,” 210.

³⁹ Davies, “Death, Resurrection, and Life,” 210.

the author of Revelation models worship in the heavenly temple after Sukkot.⁴⁰

Eschatology in Philo and Josephus

First, Philo does not have an explicit messianic expectation. Philo's main work for eschatological beliefs is the *De Praemiis et Poenis*, which is “the treatise in which his eschatology is most fully worked out,” for it describes the rewards for obedience to the Law and the punishments for disobedience.⁴¹ As Philo introduces Num 24:7 (*Praem.* 95), which mentions a king and his kingdom (ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ), a number of scholars have argued that Philo held a type of messianic belief.⁴² However, here he only makes a point about a military leader “leading a host and warring furiously, who will subdue great and populous nations.” Thus, “the man” in this passage refers to God himself or to Israel.⁴³ Josephus' one reference to Daniel's prophecies hints at an interpretation in which Rome is destroyed by a stone cut out without hands (*Ant.* 10.210), which is to be seen as the Messiah.⁴⁴

Second, Philo's eschatology is mainly national, limited to the vision of a bright future for Israel.⁴⁵ Philo talks about the eschatological restoration of the earth at *Praem.* 153–166. For example, “the land will at last begin to obtain a respite” (*Praem.* 153). Here, Philo changes earth (γῆ) to land (χώρα), i.e., the land of Israel.⁴⁶ Josephus is largely silent about cosmic eschatology. “Because of his reluctance to interpret prophecies that might refer to the destruction of Rome, it is not unusual that he says nothing explicitly on this subject.”⁴⁷

⁴⁰ Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *The History of Sukkot in the Second Temple and Rabbinic Periods*, BJS 302 (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 1995), 100.

⁴¹ Ronald Williamson, *Jews in the Hellenistic World: Volume 1, Part 2: Philo*, Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World, 200 BC to AD 200 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 18.

⁴² Lester L. Grabbe, “Eschatology in Philo and Josephus,” in Neusner and Avery-Peck, *Judaism in Late Antiquity*, 169.

⁴³ Grabbe, “Eschatology in Philo and Josephus,” 171.

⁴⁴ Grabbe, “Eschatology in Philo and Josephus,” 183–84.

⁴⁵ Williamson, *Jews in the Hellenistic World*, 25.

⁴⁶ David T. Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos According to Moses: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 318.

⁴⁷ Grabbe, “Eschatology in Philo and Josephus,” 181.

Third, besides his eschatology, Philo's concept of joy before joy, which is the anticipation and foretaste of joy before joyful things take place, also provides a background for understanding Paul's eschatological joy. Using the metaphor of the agricultural world, Philo connects joy to hope: "The good, when it has come, is accompanied by joy, and when it is expected, by hope. For we rejoice at its arrival and hope when it is coming" (*Names* 161). "But we rejoice over the other good things not only when they have already come about beforehand and are present, but also when they are looked for in the future ... Seeing then, that joy, not only when present but when hoped for, causes the soul to overflow with gladness" (*Alleg. Interp.* 3.86–87).

Paul's Eschatological Joy in His Thanksgiving (1:3–8)

"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil 1:3–6). There are two major structural relationships that organize Paul's thanksgiving in 1:3–8. First, there is particularization with substantiation. On the one hand, Paul particularizes his thanksgiving toward God (1:3) by identifying its specific content, which includes Philippians' past partnership in the gospel (1:5), God's future completion of the good work (1:6), and the Philippians' being partakers of grace with Paul during his imprisonment (1:7). On the other hand, the preposition ἐπί in 1:5 indicates a "marker of the basis for a state of being, action, or result," or "a marker of perspective" (with causal nuance).⁴⁸ Thus, the three elements in 1:5–7 function as the cause for Paul's thanksgiving (1:3), especially his joy (1:4).

Second, as Gordon Fee rightly points out, Paul's thanksgiving in 1:3–8 forms a chiasm:

NOT TO BE USED WITHOUT COPYRIGHT PERMISSION

⁴⁸ BDAG, 364–65. As major scholars suggest, the preposition ἐπί indicates substantiation. ἐπί with dative object (LN 89.27): 'for' [ICC, NTC, Pl; KJV, NJB], 'because (of)' [LN, WBC, WEC; NIV, NRSV, REB, TNT], 'on account of' [Ea, Mou], 'on the basis of' [LN, Lns], 'in view of' [NASB], 'at' [NAB] (J. Harold Greenlee, *An Exegetical Summary of Philippians*, 2nd ed. [Dallas: SIL International, 2008], 17).

- A. I thank God at all my remembrance of you (personally)
- B. I pray with joy because of your fellowship in the gospel
- C. I am convinced God will keep this going until the end
- B'. I have every right to this confidence because I have you in my heart and because of your fellowship in the gospel
- A'. God is my witness as to my deep longing for you all.⁴⁹

Paul's Friendship with Philippians

Paul's thanksgiving to God in 1:3–8 presents two major lines around Paul's joy: Paul's friendship with Philippians, with the focus on their partnership in the gospel, and the eschatological temporal framework from the past to "the day of Jesus Christ."

Paul's friendship with the Philippians is highlighted by the recurrence of Paul's affection for them (1:3, 8), which is intensified by the chiasm. The theme of friendship prevails in the letter, so that "Philippians is rightly called 'a hortatory letter of friendship.'"⁵⁰ However, in Paul's thanksgiving, the relationship between Paul and the Philippians is beyond mere friendship between two human parties, for the third party, God, is deeply involved. Paul turns his enjoyment of their friendship to a thanksgiving (1:3), which is intensified by the inclusive adjective *πᾶς*. The phrase *τῇ μνηίᾳ ὑμῶν* indicates an objective genitive, i.e., Paul remembers the Philippians. While the expression of prayer and remembrance (*proskynema* formula) is common in the Pauline epistles (Rom 1:9; Eph 1:16; 1 Thess 1:2; Phlm 4; 2 Tim 1:3) and letters in the Greco-Roman world in general,⁵¹ Paul elaborates it to convey his theological point, which I call a triangle model. While Fee sees the shift from a two-way to a three-way bond between Paul, the Philippians, and Christ,⁵² 1:3–8 is better understood in the triangle model between Paul, the Philippians, and God, as the following chart shows:

NOT TO BE USED WITHOUT COPYRIGHT PERMISSION

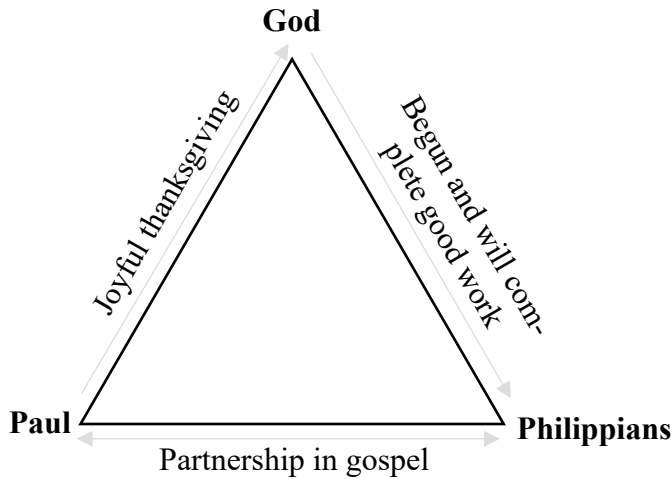
OF ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

⁴⁹ Fee, *Philippians*, 76.

⁵⁰ Fee, *Philippians*, 12; Hans-Josef Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 198–99.

⁵¹ Klauck, *Ancient Letters and New Testament*, 190.

⁵² Fee, *Philippians*, 13.



Thus, against the individualistic understanding of joy as a self-emotion, this triangle model provides a framework to understand Paul's joy (1:4), which involves a strong eschatological perspective (1:6).

First, Paul's joy is an attitude toward God. The fronted prepositional phrase *μετὰ χαρᾶς* (1:4) indicates a "marker of attendant circumstances of something that takes place," denoting the psychological aspect like moods or states of mind.⁵³ This prepositional phrase might be Paul's modification of the common expression "rejoice in the Lord" in the OT (Ps 33:1; 35:9; 40:16; 64:10; 97:12; 104:34; Isa 41:16; 61:10; Joel 2:3; Hab 3:18; Zech 10:7) and in the letter itself (3:1; 4:4, 10). This also implies that the source of joy is from God, a concept emphasized by Philo (*Cherubim* 86).

Second, Paul's concept of joy is unique. Unlike the OT formula "rejoice in the Lord," which is always a two-way interaction between God and His people as they experience salvation, Paul extends the realm of joy to his fellow believers. Paul rejoices because of their partnership in the gospel (1:5) and God's completion of His good work in them (1:6). In the OT and Jewish literature, the eschatological joy is almost always a two-way relationship between God and Israel (and the nations), for their eschatology is almost always national, concerning the people of God as a whole. But there is one parallel between Paul and 2 En. 42:3–6, which describes a joyful eschatological fellowship

⁵³ BDAG, 637.

with the ancestors. Paul's concept of this communal aspect of joy is throughout the letter, such as the compound verb συγχαίρω, which is not found in the LXX or the Pseudepigrapha.⁵⁴

Third, the theme of rejoicing and remembrance is common in Greek letters,⁵⁵ but Paul's expression is unique for its content, which is theologically oriented, or more specifically, gospel-centered. Paul rejoices because of the Philippians' partnership in the gospel from the first day until now (1:5). The noun κοινωνία means "a close association involving mutual interests and sharing,"⁵⁶ a concept significant for friendship. Yet, unlike the general emphasis on a relationship (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 1:9; 2 Cor 6:14, 13:14; Phil 2:1; 3:10), here the emphasis is on a fellowship of partnership in a shared interest and aim, the gospel. At this point, Fee is right to put the gospel at the center of the triangular relationship between Paul, Philippians, and Christ.⁵⁷ On the one hand, this gospel-centered life is Paul's own experience when he counts all things, including his previous achievements in Judaism, to be lost in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus (3:4–11). The Christ hymn in 2:6–11 is "the master model that underlies Paul's characterization of his career and of the mediating Epaphroditus."⁵⁸ On the other hand, Philippians' partnership in the gospel is a particular expression of their imitation of Paul (3:17). They have learned and received and heard and seen what Christ has done in him (4:9). In other words, the content of imitation is not Paul himself but Christ through Paul. Thus, there is a spiritual chain of imitation, first from Christ to Paul, then from Paul to the Philippians, as Susan Eastman points out: "Christ is the living Subject who lays hold of us in the mimetic process."⁵⁹

⁵⁴ But Josephus uses the verb two times (*Ant.* 8:50; 15:210).

⁵⁵ Klauck, *Ancient Letters and New Testament*, 18; Duane F. Watson, "The Integration of Epistolary and Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians," in *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture: Essays from the 1995 London Conference*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbright, JSNT 146 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 411.

⁵⁶ BDAG, 552.

⁵⁷ Fee, *Philippians*, 13.

⁵⁸ Wayne A. Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Paul's Letter to the Philippians," in *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester*, ed. Birger A. Pearson et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 335.

⁵⁹ Susan Eastman, "Imitating Christ Imitating Us: Paul's Educational Project in Philippians," in *The Word Leaps the Gap: Essays on Scripture and Theology in Honor of Richard B. Hays*, ed. J. Ross Wagner, C. Kavin Rowe, and A. Katherine Grieb (Grand

Paul expresses this gospel-centered joy later in 1:15–18, but in a negative situation. In the context of Paul's imprisonment, some ministers preach the gospel from goodwill and out of love, but some preach Christ from envy and strife, out of selfish ambition, thinking to cause Paul distress in his imprisonment. The contrast between these two groups emphasizes a totally unpleasant situation. While scholars vary regarding the identity of these opponents,⁶⁰ the point is their behavior and Paul's response. Those who oppose Paul preach the gospel from an evil reason: envy and strife (διὰ φθόνον καὶ ἔριν). The vice list often contains φθόνος (Rom 1:29; Gal 5:21; 1 Tim 6:4; Tit 3:3; 1 Peter 2:1), and it is especially common among religious groups, just as the chief priests handed Jesus over because of envy (Matt 27:18; Mark 15:10). Ἔρις means "engagement in rivalry, especially with reference to positions taken in a matter."⁶¹ Groups within the church rival against each other out of fleshly passion (1 Cor 3:3). As Ware points out, "These terms are frequently associated in early Christian literature with disharmony and divisiveness within the church."⁶² Thus, φθόνον καὶ ἔριν might be hendiadys, indicating their jealous strife against Paul. And their motive behind their evangelism is selfish ambition (ἔξ ἐριθείας), which contrasts to a pure (ἀγνός) motivation and is the source of every evil thing (Jas 3:16). Their mind or intention is to cause Paul distress in his imprisonment (θλιῦσιν ἐγείρειν τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου). The distress is not Paul's physical sufferings in prison but the opponents' attack on Paul's imprisonment. Then Paul says, "What then? Only (πλήν) that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice." The correlative εἴτε ... εἴτε designates things that do not matter (1:20, 27).⁶³ The conjunction πλήν marks something that is contrastingly added for consideration. πλήν ὅτι means "except that."⁶⁴ Thus, what matters is the continuous proclamation of the gospel (Χριστὸς καταγγέλλεται). Therefore,

Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 451.

⁶⁰ Fee, *Philippians*, 121–23; O'Brien, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 102–5.

⁶¹ BDAG, 392.

⁶² James P. Ware, *The Mission of the Church in Paul's Letter to the Philippians in the Context of Ancient Judaism*, NovTSup 120 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 188.

⁶³ Holloway, *Philippians*, 91.

⁶⁴ BDAG, 826.

this opposite situation shines a light on the core of Paul’s joy in 1:3–8. The contrast between these opponents and those who love Paul emphasizes that the key is not a pleasant relationship with the Philippians (although it is an enjoyable thing) but the advance of the gospel from their co-ministry. Joy is not an emotional response to outside circumstances but an expression of Paul’s life motto, the deepest understanding of life in his heart: To live is Christ, and to die is gain (1:21).

Eschatological Temporal Framework

Another key element around Paul’s joy is the eschatological temporal framework from the past to “the day of Jesus Christ.” What causes Paul’s joy is not only the Philippians’ past partnership in the gospel but also Paul’s eschatological hope of God’s perfection of His good work (ἔργον ἀγαθόν) in them (1:6). Phil 2:30 mentions τὸ ἔργον Χριστοῦ, which refers to the service of Epaphroditus, Paul’s fellow worker (συνεργός), especially his help for Paul. This usage is attested in other Pauline epistles (ἔργω ἀγαθῷ, 1 Tim 5:10; τῷ ἔργω τοῦ κυρίου, 1 Cor 15:58; 16:10), and it includes works of believers which will be tested in the future (1 Cor 3:13–15). Thus, Hawthorne and Martin suggest that, according to its immediate context, the good work in 1:6 refers to “sharing in the gospel.”⁶⁵ However, O’Brien, connecting God’s good work to His creation (Gen 2:2), is inclined to think that it refers to “the work of grace” in believers’ lives that began with their reception of the gospel.⁶⁶ Fee rightly points out that the prepositional phrase ἐν ὑμῖν (rather than “through you”) indicates the “salvation in Christ.”⁶⁷ This is further supported by the verbal pairing, ἐνάρχομαι and ἐπιτελέω, which Paul uses in Gal 3:3 regarding the Galatians’ salvation. However, Charles Cousar is probably right that God’s activity is not merely the salvation of the individual Philippians but their continued engagement in the gospel.⁶⁸ Salvation and evangelism are not separable in Paul’s mind, and God will bring perfection until ἡμέρας Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, an expression taken up from “day of

NOT TO BE USED WITHOUT COPYRIGHT PERMISSION

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

⁶⁵ Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 24.

⁶⁶ O’Brien, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 64; Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians*, NCB (London: Oliphants, 1976), 65–66.

⁶⁷ Fee, *Philippians*, 86–87.

⁶⁸ Cousar, *Philippians and Philemon*, 30.

the Lord” in the OT to refer to the Parousia.⁶⁹

Paul's eschatological temporal framework in 1:4–6 indicates several points. First, there is continuity between the past and the eschatological future. In contrast to the sharp distinction between the present and the eschaton in the OT and the Pseudepigrapha, Paul's already-not-yet eschatological framework smoothly connects the present to the day of Jesus, which is intensified by the recurrence of the noun ἡμέρα. Thus, while eschatological joy comes only in the future in Jewish eschatology (“heaven as a state in which things like joy and peace are experienced”⁷⁰), Paul incorporates the present and future joy together in 1:4. On the one hand, Paul's joy is similar to Philo's concept of “joy before joy,” as he rejoices for the perfection of salvation and ministry in the future. On the other hand, Paul differs from Philo because he is already experiencing the eschatological joy, although in a not-yet way.

Thus, while Jewish eschatology talks about the expectation of the full joy in the future, Paul could say “complete my joy” in the present (2:2). Although this does not necessarily mean Paul will enjoy absolute perfect joy, it does shorten the distance between the present joy and the future joy. Moreover, the possibility of the completion of joy is not from human power but from the eschatological divine power, as Cousar rightly points out when he describes the dual function of the Christ hymn:

If, on the one hand, 2:5–11 remains an ethical model that the readers are to follow, then they are left with a wonderful but unachievable ideal. If, on the other hand, the hymn is understood as the story of salvation accomplished in Jesus Christ, then the ethical demands of 2:1–4 become doable. Jesus is exalted above all powers in heaven and on earth, and Paul's joy then is made complete.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Fee, *Philippians*, 86.

⁷⁰ Emilia Wroclawska-Warchala and Michal Warchala, “The Heavens and Hells We Believe in: Individual Eschatological Images as Conditioned by Denominational Culture and Personality,” *Archiv Fur Religionspsychologie* 37 (2015): 251.

⁷¹ Charles B. Cousar, “The Function of the Christ-Hymn (2:6–11) in Philippians,” in *The Impartial God: Essays in Biblical Studies in Honor of Jouette M. Bassler*, ed. Calvin J. Roetzel and Robert L. Foster (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2007), 219.

Second, Paul conveys a stronger assurance of the perfection in the future (πεποιθώς αὐτὸ τοῦτο, 1:6). Although the major actor in 1:3–8 is God the Father, Christ plays a key role in the eschatological framework because it is “the day of Jesus Christ.” In contrast to the unnamed king/Messiah in the Jewish eschatology, Paul knows this Christ is the one who defines the coming of this full eschaton. The Christ who brings the end of time is the Christ Paul proclaims (1:18). This personal relationship with Christ gives Paul full confidence in God’s perfect work on the day of Christ.

Third, in contrast to Jewish eschatology that emphasizes the restoration of Israel and its rule over nations, mission replaces such national concern. To cite again Ware:

There existed a widespread and intense interest in the conversion of gentiles among Jews of the second temple period. This interest is widely evident, both in texts from the diaspora (e.g., LXX Isaiah, Sibylline Oracles 3, Wisdom, and Philo) and from Palestine (e.g., Parables of Enoch, Testament of Levi, Tobit). However, this did not involve a mission for the gentiles, but rather an eager expectation of an eschatological pilgrimage of the nations to Zion in the impending time of Israel’s ingathering and restoration.⁷²

On the one hand, the Christian mission’s “matrix was the Jewish notions of proselytism, eschatology, and conquest. Instead of conquering the nations by military means, Christian mission meant that the Jewish notion and method of proselytism were recast on the basis of the Jewish motif of conquest.”⁷³ On the other hand, for Paul, what God will accomplish on the day of Jesus is not political or national salvation but the completion of the personal salvation and global mission. In

⁷² Ware, *Mission of Church in Philippians*, 153. But Shaye J. D. Cohen doubts the historical evidence that the Greek-speaking Jews of the diaspora sought “in the pre-eschatological present to conquer the hearts and minds of the world, (“Adolf Harnack’s “The Mission and Expansion of Judaism’: Christianity Succeeds Where Judaism Fails,” in *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester*, ed. Birger A. Pearson et al. [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991], 168).

⁷³ Peder Borgen, “Proselytes, Conquest, and Mission,” in *Recruitment, Conquest, and Conflict: Strategies in Judaism, Early Christianity, and the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Peder Borgen, Vernon K. Robbins, and David B. Gowler, *Emory Studies in Early Christianity* 6 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1998), 74.

general, Paul reveals the close connection between personal (“in Adam” and “in Christ”) and cosmic eschatology (“old creation” and “new creation”) because they are overlapped in time span and, more importantly, they are Christ-centered (His first and second coming).⁷⁴

Fourth, as elsewhere in the letter, Paul emphasizes the communal aspect of the eschatological joy. What produces his joy is not Paul's benefit but God's good work “in you,” the church Paul serves. In contrast to the collective identity in the OT and the Pseudepigrapha, where God's people celebrate their own eschatological hope, Paul's hope is other-centered.

Philippians Are Paul's Joy and Crown (4:1–7)

“Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long *to see*, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved. Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near” (4:1, 4–5). In its broader context of chapters 3–4, 4:1 functions as a transition into the body's closing or *peroratio* (4:1–20).⁷⁵ On the one hand, the conjunction ὥστε introduces a conclusion for chapter 3, indicating hortatory causation for the preceding statements of warning, instruction, and promise. The recurrence of χαίρω/χαρά (3:1; 4:1) forms an inclusio for 3:1–4:1. On the other hand, 4:1 is a general statement that is particularized by 4:2–20.

Exegetical Notes

The noun στέφανος means a crown, either in a literal sense (a wreath made of foliage or designed to resemble foliage; Matt 27:29; Mark 15:17; John 19:2) or figurative sense (award or prize for exceptional service or conduct; the crown of righteousness, 2 Tim 4:8).⁷⁶ The metaphor of the crown often involves eschatological reward from the Lord, such as the crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4:8), the crown of life (Jas 1:12; Rev 2:10), the unfading crown of glory (1 Peter 5:4). The close parallel is 1 Thess 2:19, where Paul views Thessalonians as his

NOT TO BE USED WITHOUT COPYRIGHT PERMISSION
OF ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

⁷⁴ Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 464–65.

⁷⁵ Watson, “The Integration of Epistolary and Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians,” 422–23.

⁷⁶ BDAG, 943–44.

hope, joy, and crown of exultation, because they will be in the presence of the Lord Jesus at His second coming. As the glorious image indicates, the crown is the climax of Paul's five statements concerning his relationship with Philippians: my brethren, my beloved, my longed for, my joy, and my crown.⁷⁷ Thus, 4:1a presents a movement from present friendship to eschatological reward granted by Christ. On the one hand, the phrase *χαρὰ καὶ στέφανός μου* might be a hendiadys, for *χαρὰ* and *στέφανός* share the same personal pronoun *μου* and are connected by *καί*. Thus, the Philippians are Paul's joyful crown. On the other hand, the phrase implies substantiation. Paul rejoices because Philippians are his crown before the coming Lord. As Weber puts it, "The Philippians will provide the apostle with grounds for joy at the coming of the Savior; they will be a crown upon his head. Paul's joy is grounded in the faithfulness of the churches, which is seen as a vindication of the apostle's service."⁷⁸

4:1b indicates the condition for Philippians' being Paul's crown: in this way stand firm in the Lord (*οὕτως στήκετε ἐν κυρίῳ*). This is a general statement that must be illuminated by its broader context. On the one hand, as a hortatory conclusion, the Philippians should stand firm for the following reasons: the existence of the opponents who put their confidence in the flesh rather than Jesus (3:1–1) and behave as the enemies of the cross (3:18–19), their imitation of Paul's straining towards the goal of perfection (3:12–16), and the heavenly hope of the bodily resurrection (3:20–21). On the other hand, as a general exhortation, 4:1 is particularized in the following ways: concord within the community in the setting of division (4:2–3), joy in the setting of anxiety and want (4:4–7), and contentment in all circumstances (4:8–20). These function as the climax of ch. 4 and a particular means for 4:2–7.⁷⁹

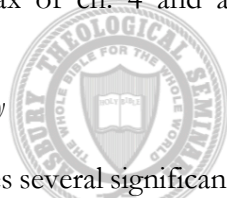
Implications for Eschatological Joy

In its context, 4:1 provides several significant aspects of Paul's concept of eschatology and joy. First, Paul's smooth movement from his present ministry to his future crown before Christ reveals close

⁷⁷ David Bauer's lecture in NT(IBM)937.

⁷⁸ Webber, "The Concept of Rejoicing in Paul," 316.

⁷⁹ David Bauer's lecture in NT(IBM)937.



continuity between the present and future. There is no sharp distinction between the present and the future, as Jewish eschatology indicates. For Paul, he has already been ministering in the eschaton, for the end of time has already taken place in this world. This connection is not single-direction but dual-direction. Not only does Paul's ministry extend into the eschaton, but also the eschaton enters into the present by shaping the lifestyle of the faith community. Thus Dunn says: "The powers of the age to come (Heb 6:5) were already shaping lives and communities, as they would also in due course shape the cosmos."⁸⁰ Because of the future bodily resurrection (3:21), the Philippians should and could stand firm in the Lord (4:1), a notion which contrasts to following the enemies of the cross (3:18). Thus, eschatological vision is the resolution for the Philippians' current crisis.

Second, 4:1 indicates the communal aspect of eschatological joy. Paul develops a two-way friendship between him and the Philippians into a three-way relationship between the Philippians, him, and the eschaton of Christ: the Philippians are Paul's joyful crown at the second coming of Christ. This expression indicates a shift of eschatological blessing from objective to relational. In the OT and the Pseudepigrapha, the eschatological blessings are outward, either material or spiritual. However, here the crown is not some impersonal thing but a group of believers. Paul does not say talk about certain rewards out of his ministry to the Philippians, but the Philippians themselves are his eschatological crown.

Moreover, although Paul does identify the opponents as "the enemies of the cross of Christ" (3:18), there is no mention of the joy over the punishment of the enemies as Jewish eschatology does. On the contrary, although he knows their end is destruction (3:19), Paul warns against the enemies with tears (3:18). This attitude does not mean that Paul denies the final judgment, but it indicates a shift of focus in Paul's eschatology, paying less attention to the fate of the wicked and emphasizing those who are blessed in the eschaton by connecting it to the present life.

Third, there is a shift from the moral requirement to the ministry requirement. Paul follows the concept of reward for the righteous in Jewish eschatology, but he redefines "faithfulness," which is now gospel/ministry-centered and church-centered. Some Jewish writings

⁸⁰ Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 466.

include serving the Lord as a moral requirement for the eschatological reward (2 En. 42:6), but the major idea is still morality, such as observance of the law. Yet, Paul focuses on a specific service: his mission.

Moreover, the metaphor of gaining a crown in a game implies challenge, toil, and even suffering. Enduring suffering, even martyrdom, has already been in Jewish eschatology (4 Ezra 7:89–90; Ques. Ezra 6), and Paul adopts it into suffering for the sake of Christ, which is a lifestyle for believers (1:29). Paul views his chains as part of his ministry (1:16). As Cassidy puts it: “Paul himself is not ashamed of his chains. He has received them not as a result of a fall from grace but rather because of his sharing in grace. Further, his imprisonment has actually served to carry the gospel forward (1:12).”⁸¹ Thus, as Kraftchick insists, Paul has a unique understanding of death for ministers:

The letter serves as a means for them to reflect on a life worthy of their citizenship and calling (1:27). Paul’s comments on death: Christ’s, Epaphroditus’s, and his own, all contribute to that end. By recasting his own death as gain, focusing on the connection of death and obedience, Paul creates an understanding of life where death is a mode of being, not a single moment at the end of physical existence.⁸²

It is appropriate to add that Paul’s view is within his eschatological framework, such as the eternal fellowship with Christ (1:23). Paul views “his suffering as an integral part of the process of salvation” in the already-but-not-yet framework.⁸³ This notion is Paul’s secret of rejoicing even in his suffering for Christ.⁸⁴

Fourth, in Paul’s particular exhortation in 4:4–7, he connects rejoicing to the coming of Christ as an imperative: rejoice always, for the

⁸¹ Richard J. Cassidy, *Paul in Chains: Roman Imprisonment and the Letters of St. Paul* (New York: Crossroad, 2001), 168.

⁸² Steven Kraftchick, “Abstracting Paul’s Theology: Extending Reflections on ‘Death’ in Philippians,” in Roetzel and Foster, *The Impartial God*, 210.

⁸³ Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 496.

⁸⁴ Cf. Troy W. Martin, “Emotional Physiology and Consolatory Etiquette: Reading the Present Indicative with Future Reference in the Eschatological Statement in 1 Peter 1:6,” *JBL* 135 (2016): 659–60. Martin’s study on 1 Pet 1:6 and 1:8 indicates a similar conclusion. The future exuberant joy at the revelation of Jesus Christ brings the nearness and certainty of this joy for those who are grieving at present.

Lord is near. In other words, to rejoice is not only possible for believers in the present age but also the obligation of believers in the eschatological framework. The indicative δ κύριος ἐγγύς stands at the center of Paul's exhortation in 4:4–7. The adverb ἐγγύς could indicate either spatial or temporal proximity,⁸⁵ both of which are used by Paul.⁸⁶ Intertextually, 4:5 echoes Ps 145:18: “the Lord is near all who call upon him.” It introduces 4:6–7 as an expression of “realized” eschatology: because the Lord is ever-present, do not be anxious but pray. On the other hand (or perhaps at the same time), it also echoes the apocalyptic language of Zeph 1:7 and 14 (“the Day of the Lord is near”), picked up by Paul in Rom 13:12, and found in Jas 5:8 regarding the coming of the Lord.⁸⁷ Although the intense eschatological reference in the immediate context (3:20–21; 4:1) favors the temporal sense, Paul might have both temporal and spatial senses in mind in his already-not-yet eschatological framework.

Thus, the “apocalyptic motivation” produces the imperative of rejoicing always (4:4), which repeats verbatim 3:1, but here Paul adds the adverb πάντοτε (“always”). Thus Holloway comments that “the Christ-believer was to maintain a joyful disposition at all times.”⁸⁸ Paul is not unrealistic; on the contrary, he recognizes the need of the Philippians, which might easily lead to anxiety (4:6). The resolution is the nearness of the Lord, which involves two aspects. On the one hand, like Paul's joy in 1:4, which is out of the perfection of God's good work on the day of Jesus, the assurance of the second coming of Christ removes their anxiety (4:6) and grants their joy. On the other hand, that the Lord is near also conveys a sense of eagerness, i.e., Lord, come quickly (Rev 22:20). Such desire calls for a joyful life fitting this eschatological vision.



NOT TO BE USED WITHOUT COPYRIGHT PERMISSION

⁸⁵ BDAG, 271. OF ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

⁸⁶ A spatial sense is seen in Eph 2:13, 17, “to dwell in a near place.” A temporal sense is seen in Rom 13:11, “the salvation is nearer.”

⁸⁷ Fee, *Philippians*, 407–8.

⁸⁸ Holloway, *Philippians*, 182–83.

Conclusion

The combination of the study on Jewish eschatology and Inductive Bible Study on key passages in Philippians proves to be a fruitful methodology to examine Paul’s eschatological joy therein. Jewish eschatology provides both an ideological framework and a comparative reference for a close study on the text. Paul’s already-not-yet eschatology shapes his concept and experience of joy. Although he believes in a specific time for the Parousia (“the day of Jesus Christ”), Paul emphasizes the “realized” eschatology while having the future in mind. The continuity stresses joy as the present experience rather than the future joy. Such eschatological joy emphasizes the communal relationship with the faith community in a triangular model (Paul, Philippians, and God). It is also gospel/mission-centered rather than virtue-centered, which makes joy possible and obligatory even during suffering.



NOT TO BE USED WITHOUT COPYRIGHT PERMISSION
OF ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A Journey with Inductive Bible Study: From Ignorance to Practitioner

G. Richard Boyd
Wesley Biblical Seminary
rboyd@wbs.edu

I was thirty-one years old when I was born again reading the Bible.¹ I did not grow up in a Christian home and my family hardly ever went to church. Somewhere, my sister has a picture of the two of us, dressed up in our finest and headed to an Easter Sunday Service. We were probably four and five years old at the time. That is the only extant evidence of ever having gone to church in my childhood. My father just didn't see the need for "religion" and he discouraged any thoughts my mother might have had of taking our family to church.

My father's approach to child-rearing was to live a morally-righteous life, according to his standards, absent of alcohol, smoking, and drugs, and to be helpful to others as long as it didn't inconvenience him too much. He also firmly believed in gaining as much information as possible in order to make the best decisions possible. He read voluminously and encouraged my sister and me to do the same, but the Bible was never a part of that and never factored into the decision-making of my parents or my sister and me.

With that kind of environment, I would set goals for myself and pour all that I had into reaching those goals, the attainment of which never did satisfy. I would create these goals and treat them as idols, producing worship in my approach to reaching them. I would pour everything into their attainment. My soul was always seeking satisfaction from these "idols" but never becoming satisfied, even through the brief attainment of the goals I had established and often reached. And once again, the Bible was completely out of the picture. This continued into my thirties.

NOT TO BE USED WITHOUT COPYRIGHT PERMISSION

¹ I wish to express my thanks to Dr. David R. Bauer and Dr. Fredrick J. Long, the editors of the *Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies*, brothers and friends of mine for more than a quarter of a century. Thank you for the invitation and opportunity to share my experiences and thoughts on IBS. It was fun to look back and think through what God has done, in no small part through you.

When I was born again in 1991, my paradigm for life itself changed completely, especially since it took place reading the Bible. Jodi and I had been married for two years and I was working as an applications engineer for a data-acquisition company. I was on a business trip to Albuquerque, NM, and reading a brand-new Bible I had bought during an early Christmas shopping trip Jodi and I had taken the previous weekend. It was an NIV *Life Application Bible*², and, as it was my first time reading the Bible, and without any real background, I relied heavily upon the application notes to help me understand what was going on in the text.

I should mention that my choice to read the Bible sprung from my frustration of another goal attained but without satisfaction, and the quest for something that might help me make sense of it. I knew that many people found comfort in the Bible, including my sister who had become a Christian well over a decade earlier, and I thought I would read it to see what it had for me. As far as I was concerned, the Bible was simply a large book that contained some kind of spiritual guidance. But it carried no more authority or veracity with me than any other book. I was the one who determined what was true and what wasn't true for me. At that time my personal library consisted mainly of a number of sports books, a few business books, and of course my engineering texts, and I wanted to see what the Bible said about life.

Not knowing anything about the sixty-six books that comprise the Bible, or their canonical arrangement, and being an engineer with a very methodical mentality, I began reading in Genesis 1:1. When I reached Genesis 35:2 and the reference to “the foreign gods that are in your midst,” I stopped. I wasn't sure what the words “foreign gods” referred to, so I looked at the application note³. The comments not only explained the term, but also addressed my heart-condition, and the Lord used it to bring an absolute sense of conviction to me and, in an instant, I knew God was real. I knew the Bible was His word, and I knew that He had spoken to me and, somehow, would continue to do so in this book. In a flash, the glory of the Lord filled ... the hotel

² *Life Application Bible*, NIV[®] (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988).

³ *Ibid.*, 72. The relevant portion of the application note reads as follows: “Jacob ordered his household to get rid of their gods. Unless we remove idols from our lives, they can ruin our faith. What idols do we have? An idol is anything we put before God. Idols don't have to be physical objects; they can be thoughts or desires.”

room. It was a tabernacle of sorts, and I became a “living” soul in that moment.

I called Jodi back in Champaign, IL, and told her we needed to go to church (I didn’t know what else to say) and she literally said, “Who is this?” I don’t remember what else I said in that conversation but she knew something radical had happened to me. Little did she know how drastically our lives would change, not only because of that moment at the Four Seasons in Albuquerque, but also through the years since that moment thirty years ago.

One of the effects of that event involves my awareness of the power of the Bible for God’s voice to speak to the human soul and transform it. My confidence in the Bible truly being God’s word was firmly established and has not wavered one bit since that moment. Thus is the impact of an experience of such magnitude. But after becoming a spiritual infant, popping out of the spiritual womb, as it were, I was famished and wanted nothing more than to feed on that word. I was hungry and wanted all I could get in the way of nourishment, and I knew the source of that food was primarily the Bible.

Being a new Christian and knowing that the Bible was a means of receiving life from God, as well as having an engineer’s mentality, I was determined to methodically read through the Bible, throwing myself into that endeavor. Upon my return from the business trip, Jodi and I agreed to read through the Bible together. We went to a Christian bookstore (back then, pre-internet, there were two or three Christian bookstores in Champaign-Urbana, and today they are all gone) and found *The One-Year Bible* that provided the reading plan and schedule.⁴ However, due to my need for explanation, we actually read from the *Life Application Bible*, including all of the application notes and the profiles and all of the various features of it in our nightly reading. We read through the Bible together in 1992 and again in 1993.

At this point I was learning the content of the Bible but without concern for any structural elements within each book. I read the Bible as if it was a single book that could and should be interpreted across books, from subject to subject. For example, I thought that every Christian certainly knows that the Bible is the word of God, and when I read John 1:14 about “the word becoming flesh,” I understood it to mean that Jesus is the Bible in the flesh, plain and simple. Or, in Ezek

⁴ *The One Year Bible*, NIV (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 1988).

3:17–21, a passage that grabbed me and would not let me go, I understood the call to be a watchman to be the responsibility of every Christian. I gave no thought to the context of the book of Ezekiel or his particular call, found in ch. 3. The Bible spoke to me, and therefore, I reasoned it must apply to every Christian, but especially me. I sincerely wanted to know what the Bible had to say (the content of it), but my hermeneutic was to interpret verses through prayer, other passages (without regard for the context of the individual books), and my own brief experience and intuition. I relied heavily on prayer through this process, which also included doing thematic studies and accessing chain-references from book-to-book.

While reading the Bible and growing in my knowledge of the content, Jodi and I sat under the gentle pastoral leadership of Tom Ryan at the Urbana Free Methodist Church.⁵ Pastor Tom thought of himself more as a teacher than a preacher, and we were blessed to have him as our local shepherd. We grew and were regularly fed by Tom. But I was surprised that, within a few months, I seemed to have gained more biblical knowledge (again, content-wise) than most of the others in our Sunday School classes and other small group meetings, and I quickly grew dissatisfied with the several studies we were using in the various programs. I wanted to study the Bible, the books of the Bible, rather than contemporized thematic studies from a booklet, typically application-oriented, which was fairly common. I don't recall very many, if any, book-studies being offered at that time.

My greatest growth during this time actually came out of fellowship I had with a couple of other friends I had known long before becoming a Christian. The three of us had played on the same softball team for years and we became close on and off the field. Jeff Altmyer, the short-stop on the team (I played second base), was my closest teammate, and Matt Mortenson, our left fielder, was my best friend. Jeff had come out of the Roman Catholic church and had been a Christian for a number of years, but I don't recall ever hearing about Jesus from him. Matt was born again about a year before I was, because of a Bible Jeff had given him. Once I was born again, we began meeting three or four times a week, just to share with one another what we had come across in our own reading, how the Lord was speaking to us, and to pray and

⁵ During our two-and-a-half year stay at that church, we were involved in a move from Urbana to Champaign. The church is known today as the Mattis Avenue Free Methodist Church.

encourage each other in Christ. There was no formal structure for our gatherings and they lasted only an hour or two each morning we would meet, but I grew by leaps and bounds.

Then, in 1994, while reading Ezek 3, God called me to study His word.⁶ I had been wrestling with a sense that God was wanting me to be more than simply an engineer who was also a Christian. I sensed that he was going to call me into some kind of vocational ministry, but what and when? In April of 1994, the Lord very clearly called me to study the Bible, and the next few weeks I discerned that God was calling me to seminary.

At the time, the only seminary that I knew anything about was Asbury Theological Seminary (ATS). Eventually, God called me to ATS, so Jodi and I quit our jobs, sold our house, and moved to Wilmore, KY to begin my education. While talking with the admissions counselor and my advisor, I decided on the non-parish track of the Master of Divinity program. I chose the MDiv degree, not because I felt a call to the pastorate, but because I wanted a three-year program rather than a two-year program. I wanted and felt I needed as much education as I could get, with the focus on the Bible.

A friend of mine, the only one I knew who had gone to Asbury, told me to take Dr. David Bauer for my first Inductive Bible Study (IBS) class (English Bible, as it used to be called) because of the rigorous method he taught. My friend's recommendation was not a slight toward any of the other fine IBS professors at Asbury, but having spent two years at ATS and having gotten a sense of the significance of IBS in preparation for any ministry, as well as the importance of that initial IBS course, he was simply emphasizing that the foundational course upon which the student's Bible study practice is built was crucial, and in his experience, Dr. Bauer's rigor was helpful. My friend was confident that it would best prepare me for everything to come.

When I matriculated at Asbury, I was already convinced of the authority of the Bible over the life of the believer, but it never occurred to me to approach it as a literary work. My overwhelming passion was to study the Bible, but I did not have the tools and this was my chance.

My first year at seminary set the direction of my life, though I did not know it when I registered. I loaded up, taking three semesters of Greek, two of Hebrew, and IBS with Dr. Bauer. I took other courses

⁶ The verse that called me to seminary was Ezek 3:1.

as well, but the biblical studies courses were the building blocks that I needed most, and they were life changing. The foundation was laid in that first year.

My second year I took Greek and Hebrew exegesis courses and IBS classes from Dr. Joseph Dongell and Dr. David Thompson, as well as more with Dr. Bauer. The IBS and language emphasis continued through my final year at Asbury, but each inductive course built on that first one which proved to be the key that unlocked a multi-layered contextual understanding of Scripture as a whole, one that continues to grow and develop.

The primary quality I recognized and admired in each of these teachers was a depth of understanding of the biblical text that transcended anything I had previously experienced. Prior to coming to Asbury, I had been a critical audience whenever I would hear a sermon or read a book or listen to Christian radio. I was always comparing and contrasting what I was receiving with what I read in the Bible, and I found in these professors an acuity and insight that came straight from the text. Their grasp of the text far surpassed that which I had encountered, and yet they were able to point out that the source of the insight had been there in the text all along. It is not what they brought to the text that provided the insight, but it came from their ability to discover relationships in the text which provided the depth of understanding of the text. These instructors taught me to approach and study the text carefully, contextually, and holistically. In other words, they taught me to study inductively, considering all relevant factors, and all without presuppositions (as much as possible).

As I learned this “new” approach, I began to see for myself connections within the text and relationships between passages in a way that allowed me to increasingly understand the functions of passages within books, and to see books as whole units. Through Asbury, specifically through the approach of inductive Bible study in combination with Greek and Hebrew, God was training me how to hear his voice more clearly in the written word, and it all began with that first IBS class in the spring of 1995 (little did I know that one day I would teach the languages and, especially, IBS).

One of my most lasting and recurring memories from that first class was the joy I felt in pouring myself into an assignment in Mathew EB (English Bible). We students would arrive in the classroom, walk

up to Dr. Bauer's desk at the front, and turn in our papers.⁷ I would place mine on Dr. Bauer's desk, then take my seat with the other students, and Dr. Bauer would present his findings on the same passage.

His style of teaching was “method transparent,” that is, he would teach method by taking us through the practice of the steps in the inductive approach, applying them to a specific passage. After spending hours and hours on the given assignment and submitting it, Dr. Bauer would blow us all away with his own work which was invariably light-years beyond ours. In fact, it was both the most discouraging and encouraging experience in seminary at one and the same time. It was discouraging in the sense that, following hours upon hours in my own devoted effort to extract as much as I could from my observations of a given passage, or my attempt to find illuminating evidence in order to draw even more insightful inferences to arrive at an answer to the question we were addressing (interpretation), my greatest efforts were shown to be pitifully puny in comparison (more like contrast) to the results of Dr. Bauer's work.

But it was also encouraging because he was demonstrating to us what was possible by applying the IBS method to the text and considering all relevant evidence. He repeatedly pointed out that, when we were out of time for the given study (and time always runs out in these assignments), there will always be more evidence to consider. That paradoxical contrast of feelings kept me moving forward, desirous of growing in IBS and applying it to the biblical text, and desperately wanting to narrow the qualitative gap between his work and mine. This was not a matter of pride, but a matter of calling, Christian calling. I felt compelled to improve in IBS because, somehow, I knew this would be the arena for the rest of my days. If I was to deal with the Bible at any level, I needed to give my maximum effort to improve my ability to understand it, and I knew that IBS was the point of access for that improvement.

I recall the first time I discovered the existence of Matthew 28:18, specifically in its relationship to 28:19–20. I was astonished. The Great Commission did not merely stand alone, as if it was given specifically for church bulletins and banners and mission statements. The Great Commission is actually the intended, imperatival effect of the authority

⁷ Electronic submission, in those days, was rare. I even hand-wrote every assignment. I still have them in a file cabinet. I am very old-school.

given to Jesus, all authority over all creation, and the implications of that reality are far-reaching in a way that the church simply doesn't explore or explain very well. How could the church overlook such a significant part of such a ubiquitous missional confession? The Great Commission is vital for the life and growth of the church, but this charge to disciples to make disciples needs to be understood within the context of the Gospel of Matthew as a whole, and not simply as an exhortation to be excised from its setting and separated from the various other aspects of the message of Matthew that are so valuable and essential, but too often disregarded. Books must be studied as whole books, and individual passages and verses need to be studied in the immediate context of those passages, but also, always, within the context of the specific book. This point continues to be reinforced and strengthened in me.

Another example I came across of the value of the IBS method came through a simple study of 1 John, and it occurred by means of the transformative nature of IBS. For those of us who embrace and practice the inductive study approach, we find that our powers of observation and consideration of contextual elements improves over time and applies to all matters of life, not just the study of the Bible. But they do apply to the study of the Bible, for certain, and such is the case for me in 1 John.

Within the last five to ten years, I have come to see this book with new eyes due to a particular structural relationship that I see at work in the book. I believe it is arranged by means of summarization in the tri-fold declaration of what “we know”, found at the end of the book (5:18”20). This affirmation of what “we know,” the content of which is provided in 1:1”5:17, is brought to a climax with the assertion: This one (Jesus) is the true God and eternal life (5:20b). The final verse then reveals the main point of the entire sermon: Children, keep yourselves from idols (5:21)! That is the main point of the entire book, from the exhortation to “walk in the light” (1:7) and to “walk as Jesus did” (2:6), to laying down our lives for one another because Jesus did so for us (3:16), and to keep his commands (5:3). This Jesus, whom the author/preacher and others (“we”) have physically experienced with the senses (1:1), is the manifestation of the life which is eternal, the result of which is to keep away from anything or anyone else opposed to this confession of Jesus because it is idolatry. Jesus, this life we have actually, palpably experienced, is the true God. This is the point the author

has been explaining in detail throughout the book. It is not just a collection of aphorisms, but a consistent exhortation to stay focused on the reality of Jesus and reject any temptation to stray from following Christ, because that is idolatry.

My experience, beginning with that first IBS class and continuing throughout the years, has been one of realizing that the student continues to grow in familiarity with and understanding of IBS as he or she practices the application of it to the text. The more time one spends observing the text, the greater the ability to see, consider, test, and receive insight from those observations. Clearly, this kind of approach requires time and effort in order to reach ever-increasing depth of a given text (and always with still more hidden treasure remaining when we're out of time), but I, personally, have found no greater investment of personal resources than this approach to biblical study. It causes growth, not only in the understanding of a given text, but of the Bible as a whole, and of my relationship with the Lord.

There is one other significant aspect which I need to note, and it comes directly from my call to seminary back in 1994. The use of the languages, Hebrew and Greek, are invaluable to include in IBS. Although many schools that teach an inductive method of Bible study, like Asbury and Wesley Biblical Seminary, where I teach, used to call these courses "English Bible," the use of the original languages to the inductive study can always take the study to another level. I have experienced this personally, both in my own personal study and in my years of teaching IBS. In my application of the languages to my studies, I have discovered my students observing the difference it makes in observations, the questions that arise from the observations, and the interpretation of the passages as those questions are then answered in the text. The knowledge of the languages, when properly applied to IBS, provides greater depth in virtually every case.

As I was finishing my degree at Asbury in the spring of 1997, the Lord called me to Christian radio where I served at a ministry in southern Minnesota and northern Iowa. I was able to expose the staff and listeners to the basics of IBS through a staff Bible study of John which quickly became an on-air program: "The Tuesday Bible Study." This aired for four years and it was a staple in our weekly on-air lineup. The listeners were able to join the very staff they heard on-the-air every day, but rather than introducing songs or reporting news or talking with

them one-on-one,⁸ all of us were gathered around a table with microphones in the middle of a round table, and we opened up and studied the Gospel of John together. We worked through passages inductively, making observations, considering structural elements of passages, and drawing inferences from connections. We were able to provide some very tentative interpretations of various passages, but always with the understanding that more evidence was left in the text to consider and study at a later time. It was a wonderful time each week and the listeners got to follow along. I was blessed to facilitate the study, making sure that we stayed on point and that no one carried presuppositions into the text. This exposure, I am sure, helped many to rethink how they could and should study the Bible.

My training in IBS really did shape every aspect of the ministry of which I was a part for that season, especially the on-air elements. But in 2005, the Lord called Jodi and me back to Wilmore to work on a doctorate in New Testament under Dr. Bauer. The subject was the book of Hebrews and the methodology applied was IBS-oriented.

I had taken Hebrews EB (IBS) when I was an MDiv student, but I put that work aside and began fresh, reading through the text repeatedly, determined to see how the text was arranged structurally. I was committed to following the evidence of the text wherever it led, and eventually the thesis developed into a study of the central theological motif of the book. What began as a desire to discover the anthropology of Hebrews, led to the discovery that Hebrews' anthropology is directly related to the Christology of the book, which is initially broached in the first verse-and-a-half.⁹ This area had not been developed by scholars in any significant or sustained way prior to the study, and the method that uncovered it came straight out of my time in IBS. It was an amazing journey that turned into a thesis I successfully defended in May of 2012.

Following the defense, which required very few corrections or revisions (I remember completing them on the flight back from London,

⁸ A foundational principle for radio, especially music radio, involves talking with the listener as if it is just the two of you sitting together and talking as friends, one on one, as opposed to speaking to a large crowd at one time. This promotes intimacy with the listeners individually.

⁹ My thesis argues for “sonship” as the central theological motif, arising from the contrast in Heb 1:1–2a and the emphasis of the author on how God has spoken to us eschatologically ἐν υἱῷ.

the place of my defense), I began applying for a teaching position. The ideal position would be one where I could teach IBS and Greek (and possibly Hebrew), but that idea seemed quite distant at times.

I taught as an adjunct for four schools over the next two years until one of them, Wesley Biblical Seminary, called for applications for full-time professor of Biblical Studies. The current professor at that time, Dr. Gareth Lee Cockerill, was transitioning to Academic Dean as he was preparing for retirement, and the one hired would take on Dr. Cockerill's teaching load which involved teaching Inductive Bible Study and Greek, with the potential to also teach Hebrew. It was exactly what I had hoped to find, and if somehow I was chosen, I would be working with someone I admired. I had come to know Dr. Cockerill through various Hebrews meetings over the years and he urged me to apply.¹⁰ After interviewing with several people at WBS, I was hired and began teaching full-time in the fall of 2014.

Never having taught full-time before, I quickly discovered how little I knew about teaching and, more to the point, learning. I needed to remember that learning IBS is a process that requires a shift in thinking and intentionality on the part of the student. Nearly every student of IBS must be committed to changing his or her approach to the Bible. Most students come into a first-semester IBS class carrying all previous knowledge and presuppositions into the text, as I did in the beginning of my first IBS class. But the student quickly learns that the emphasis in an inductive approach is to read the text free of presuppositions (as much as possible) and try to grasp how the author has arranged the material to deliver the message he or she intended. In other words, IBS students must learn to read the text according to how the text was intended to be read by the original recipients.

To accomplish this transformation, students must learn to identify the central concern of the given book (called identifying the General Materials in *Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics*, by David Bauer and Robert Traina¹¹) at the outset, the

¹⁰ Dr. Cockerill had been chosen to write the successor to the commentary on Hebrews by F. F. Bruce in the New International Commentary on the New Testament series: Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012). This volume was widely lauded in the academy from its release, and is one of the best commentaries on Hebrews currently available.

¹¹ David R. Bauer and Robert A. Traina, *Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 83–87. As

structure of the book-as-a-whole and parts of the book-as-wholes, as well as the structural relationships that control the book and major portions of the book. All of these structural elements involve observing and determining how the author has arranged the book and parts of the book in relationship to other parts of the book. These elements are often overlooked or undervalued regarding their importance to properly comprehending the author's message in the book.

There is another critical element that is essential to proper understanding of a text and avoiding misinterpretation: the identification of the literary genre of a given text. Far too many students attempt to interpret apocalyptic texts as they would prose narrative or discourse, and at the seminary level, those students go on to preach to and teach others who will follow the same pattern. The student has to know what kind of literature he or she is reading so as not to misinterpret the text and mislead others. Understanding the type of literature is imperative to knowing how to interpret the given text.

I had to be reminded of the importance of these aspects of observation and how challenging they are to beginning IBS students, as I began my teaching ministry. The challenge can and does become so difficult that sometimes it requires multiple assignments or even multiple semesters for students to really grasp and understand them. Until they come to the point of comprehension, some students will try to execute the steps but not know why or what they are actually trying to learn about the passage and how it fits into incisive observation and interpretation. I have learned to slow down and listen to students, and to meet with them to try to help them learn the method.

Looking back, I am infinitely blessed to have lived the second half of my life, to this point, as a Christian. I lived in the dark, apart from God and being completely ignorant of His kingdom for thirty-one years, and when I was born again by reading the Bible, I was made aware of the access we have to the thoughts and the presence of God in the pages of Scripture. He confronted me in my sin and revealed himself to me at, seemingly, one and the same moment. From that point, I knew He was present in the Bible. I just didn't know how to study it. I simply knew that I wanted to spend the rest of my days on this earth coming to know Him better.

an aside, when this book first came out, I felt as if I was sitting in Dr. Bauer's class once again as he painstakingly, meticulously worked through the various steps and aspects of the IBS method.

When I was called to seminary two-and-a-half years later, specifically to study the Bible, it was God's providential hand that led me to Asbury, and in particular to Dr. Bauer.¹² I was taught well by Dr. Bauer, along with Dr. Dongell¹³ and Dr. Thompson, and for that I am forever grateful.¹⁴ They prepared me for my doctoral work, which then equipped me for following in their footsteps in preparing the next generation of IBS students.

I also wish to express my appreciation to Wesley Biblical Seminary in Jackson, MS, for enabling me to utilize my gifts and God's calling to teach IBS and Greek to students hungry for greater intimacy with the Lord in His word. I am so grateful to teach in these biblical studies areas at a place that proclaims the authority of the Bible and call to holiness without hesitation and with boldness. Glory to God in the highest!

¹² Perhaps the greatest providential blessing I have received is to have been led to and placed at the feet of Dr. David Bauer. His acumen in the field of Biblical Studies is unsurpassed, in my opinion, and his openness to and kindness toward all of his students is more than extraordinary, it is truly exemplary. I am grateful for the opportunity to walk with him as he has guided me in so many ways.

¹³ I want to thank Joe (as he told me to call him, going back to my MDiv days) who gave me an opportunity to be a grader for three semesters of my MDiv work. My appreciation for him continues to increase through the years.

¹⁴ I also wish to express my gratitude to the Greek and Hebrew teaching fellow who taught me the languages, Brian Russell, now Dr. Brian Russell, Associate Provost and Dean of the School of Ministry at the Orlando Campus of ATS. We had many discussions and shared a meal or two during those formative years. He and Dr. Bauer were the first to suggest that I consider doctoral work and, again, I am grateful for his investment in me.



NOT TO BE USED WITHOUT COPYRIGHT PERMISSION
OF ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

*A Tribute to WILLIAM J. ABRAHAM
(1947-2021)*

Alan J. Meenan
The Word is Out Ministry
ameenan@thewordisout.com

What can one say to encapsulate an extraordinary life lived purposefully, intentionally and magnificently for the glory of God? Billy Abraham was such a character. One could recite the statistics of his birth, family history, marriage and descendants, the schools he attended, his many accomplishments, his academic prowess, the amazing athleticism of his brilliant mind, the twenty-five books and numerous articles he authored, all of which would fill pages of overwhelming data (cf. <https://www.ariacremation.com/obituary/23980/>). But Billy was much more than these impressive achievements.

Yes, he was born one of six boys and raised in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland. Yes, he attended Portora Royal High School, Queen's University of Belfast, Asbury Theological Seminary and Oxford University. Billy was fiercely proud to be Irish and exulted in his broad, extensive Irish country accent which he determined never to lose. Even in the hallowed corridors of Oxford University where care was indubitably given to the intonation of Oxford English, Billy retained his country bumpkin style of coarse Irishmatic idiosyncrasies. Billy was comfortable in his own skin, a man of intense intelligence who never felt the need to impress. His converse often exhibited a combination of serious theological reflection and good humoured banter. He was lovely: simply a genius at heart who knew himself and cared nothing of others' superficial definition of dignity.

He maintained that country boy look with his bushy, unkempt beard. It was so unsophisticated for a man of his stature both as an acclaimed academic and prominent churchman that I repeatedly threatened to cut it off while he slept. Undaunted, he would claim emulation of the biblical character from whom he derived his name! Billy was incredibly fun-loving and could comfortably have dressed himself in a leprechaun's outfit and claimed to be overgrown. I know he would

giggle at this tribute I am writing. His laughter was unassuming, genuine, disarming, compelling. He loved to laugh. He did it often—and accompanied by that furtive twinkle in his Irish eye, Billy Abraham was an irrepressible combatant or an engaging comrade.

It was readily acknowledged that Billy had the unique ability of taking difficult and complex ideological concepts and reducing them to simple ideas for even the most inarticulate to grasp. He certainly was expert in doing that. But few recognized that he was equally talented in his ability to take simple ideas and clothe them with symphonic language to give them heightened credibility and profundity. I always considered the latter a greater contribution to the scholarly world of which he was a part.

Billy's love for God was palpable as was his appreciation of divine revelation. His was an unquenchable search for a greater and better understanding of the God of Holy Scripture. He fully embraced Christian orthodoxy, albeit with an intensely Wesleyan flair. His Methodist roots ran deep, and as a champion of biblical conservatism Billy was unmatched in his defense of doctrinal purity and dogma. At heart, Billy was an unabashed lover of Jesus Christ. One day soon after our initial arrival on the campus of Asbury Seminary in Kentucky, we walked past a group of fellow students speaking of Jesus with affectionate reverence—a far cry from the public profanity we often heard associated with the name in our native homeland. Billy just smiled and said, “Lovely, isn’t it?”

Global Methodism was Billy's dream: a new entity living out the purity of the gospel in his adopted and native homelands and extending around the world. It was this to which he was engaging energy as he surreptitiously slipped away, unheralded, from us. I have likened it to the evening converse Enoch enjoyed with God. On one delicious occasion I imagine God inviting his servant to come home with Him rather than returning to his earthly abode—and together they walked to glory. Perhaps something akin to that was what William J. Abraham experienced on 7 October, 2021. I will miss my accomplished friend, as will many, for his unexpected departure is an immense loss to the Church. But his legacy will live on not only in his wife Muriel, his son Shaun, and daughter Siobhan, all of whom he unstintingly loved, not only in the students whom he taught, and not only in the friendships which attest to changes in their lives, but also for generations to come in his writings, including the one which he wished to be his greatest

contribution to humankind, the four volume work on divine action, published by Oxford University Press.

I know Billy was a renowned scholar, a master professor, a gracious family man, a gifted and engaging speaker, a diligent student himself, a tender-hearted gentleman and yet a person of indefatigable conviction, undoubtedly the world's finest expert on epistemology. I affirm all those accolades—an exceptional man who did change the world in many ways and affected the lives of countless students and colleagues—mine included for, above all, he was my dearest friend.



NOT TO BE USED WITHOUT COPYRIGHT PERMISSION
OF ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



NOT TO BE USED WITHOUT COPYRIGHT PERMISSION
OF ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

*A Good Steward: William J. “Billy” Abraham (1947-2021)—
A Tribute delivered at Asbury Theological Seminary,
October 15, 2021*

Jason E. Vickers
Asbury Theological Seminary
jason.vickers@asburyseminary.edu

When Jessica asked me to preach for this service, she stressed that I only had 10 minutes. That means I have to cut straight to the chase. There will be no time for the blarney that Billy Abraham so dearly loved. That’s okay. There will be other times to share stories with one another. And to laugh.

William James Abraham was a lot of things. A Methodist minister. A Professor. A Philosopher. An evangelist. A missionary. A theologian. An author. A husband. A father. A friend. Above all, he was a good steward. I’ve never met anyone who stewarded his life and divine calling more faithfully than Billy Abraham. He was a tireless servant of God and the church.

Born in 1947 in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, Billy’s dad died in a farming accident when he was a young child. In the wake of this tragedy, the local Irish Methodist church looked after Billy’s family. Billy never forgot it. He never forgot his Methodist roots. For Billy Abraham, Methodism was a gift to be stewarded—something he received at a very young age and cherished all the days of his life.

In early adolescence, Billy attended the Portora Royal school in Enniskillen, a prep school known throughout Ireland in part because the Irish playwright and novelist Oscar Wilde was among its notable alumni. Billy made the most of his opportunity, eventually earning a place at the Queen’s University of Belfast, where he would read and be nourished spiritually by John Wesley’s sermons. Billy would later insist that every good Methodist should spend time reading Wesley’s sermons—not so much for their theology, as for their spiritually formative power.

Following undergraduate study, Billy came here, to Wilmore, KY, where he earned an MDiv and a scholarship for a doctorate at Oxford University. Ever inquisitive, Billy stewarded the gift of his intellect and the opportunity to learn from teachers on both sides of the Atlantic. He often said that he was blessed with two great teachers—Basil Mitchell at Oxford and Bob Traina here at Asbury. From Professor Traina, he received the gift of inductive Bible study—a gift he would steward for decades as a regular Sunday School teacher at Highland Park United Methodist Church in Dallas, TX.

Billy Abraham made the most of his education, publishing several books toward the tail end of his time at Oxford and the beginning of his teaching career at Seattle Pacific University. One of these early books—*Divine Revelation and the Limits of Historical Criticism*—was recently republished by Oxford University Press in the Oxford Classics in Religion series. He would go to write many more books during his time as professor of evangelism, Wesleyan studies, and systematic theology at Southern Methodist University.

Billy also made the most of every teaching opportunity. He didn't teach subjects or academic disciplines as much as he taught students. He poured himself into his Ph.D. students, many of whom are now leaving their own marks in theology, philosophy, ethics, Wesleyan studies, and more. What many people don't know is that Billy spent much of his spare time teaching students around the world and helping to get Bible colleges and seminaries off the ground in places like Romania, Costa Rica, Russia, and Singapore, to name just a few.

While Billy stewarded his gifts and skills, as well as his time and opportunities, his greatest legacy of stewardship is the way that he stewarded the faith once delivered to the saints. For Billy Abraham, the faith of the church was a gift of the Holy Spirit. And what a marvelous gift it was. He regarded himself as the recipient of sacred treasures which he both guarded and handed over to as many people as he good. To receive the faith of the church from Billy Abraham was joyous and life-changing. In his hands, the faith of the church was dynamic and expansive. It was living faith. It began with Holy Scripture; but it didn't end there. Billy was convinced that the Holy Spirit had given the church a whole boat load of gifts, including the sacraments, doctrine, the ancient creeds, offices of oversight, preaching, liturgy, iconography, teachers and saints. Each of these gifts had a role to play. Each was a means of grace through which the Holy Spirit brought

people to faith in Jesus Christ, healed them of all manner of spiritual illness and disease, and sanctified them entirely. Billy introduced countless people to the spiritual treasures of the ecumenical church—treasures found in Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Magisterial Protestantism, Methodism, and Pentecostalism. Over the last two years, he went so far as to finish his teaching career with the Baptists! If he would have only lived a little longer, there would’ve been icons and incense in Baptist churches all over Texas! Billy believed in his bones that the Holy Spirit was at work through the varied means of grace available in all the churches of the world. He loved going to churches with elaborate rituals and liturgies—he called it getting high up the candle. But he was equally at home in low-church settings—or what he liked to call “happy clappy churches.”

A number of years ago, Billy made waves when he gave a plenary address at the Wesleyan Theological Society. The address was called the End of Wesleyan Theology. It was a classic Billy Abraham address—full of bold claims and delightful ambiguity. Many people were angry afterwards. They heard the phrase “the end of Wesleyan theology” as a declaration that Wesleyan theology was dead and that we should all just pack up and go home. And there was a sense in which Billy was saying just that, at least where some approaches to Wesleyan theology are concerned. But he was also working on a much bigger canvas—the canvas that is the fullness of the church’s canonical heritage. On that canvas, the phrase “the end of Wesleyan theology” was equally about the telos or purpose of Wesleyan theology. Billy’s boldest move that evening was to declare that we had misunderstood John Wesley as a gift of the Holy Spirit to the church. Wesley, Billy insisted, did not belong to the canon of great theologians alongside St. Augustine and St. Athanasius; he belonged to the canon of saints. It was a move I was sympathetic with then, and I remain so, now. More than arguing about the ins and outs of Wesley’s theology, Billy wanted us to emulate Wesley’s life. He wanted us to be inspired by Wesley’s deep and tireless devotion to Christ—just as he had been as a young college student in Belfast.

I know the concept of saints makes some of us nervous. Hopefully, we can all agree that, if the saints are to have any role among us, then it should be to inspire greater devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ. John Wesley did that for Billy Abraham. And Billy did that for those of us who knew and loved him well. Billy was and is inspiring.

Sometimes, we speak, even if only playfully, of patron saints. St. Jude is the Patron Saint of Lost Causes. I don't have the authority to assign patronage to the dead. But if I did, I would declare William J. Abraham the patron saint of stewardship, so that he might inspire us all to be more faithful stewards of our talents, our skills, our minds, our callings, our time and opportunities, and above all, of the faith once delivered to the saints.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.



NOT TO BE USED WITHOUT COPYRIGHT PERMISSION
OF ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY