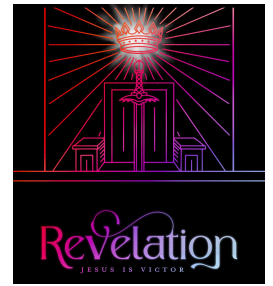


A letter to Smyrna – Stay Focused

Revelation 2:8-11

(Expanded Sermon Notes)



The disagreements started early on, but it seemed like they should have been able to work them out. Yes, they believed different things, but they also had so much in common. That is what made the hostility so confusing. Everyone understood what was at stake, and all anyone wanted to do was to live a quiet life, worship God, and take care of their family. This city seemed to have enough for everyone. The economy was strong, the city was well-planned and thoughtfully built, and it was a point of pride for the empire, which afforded it a special position in the region. Maybe that last fact, the city was a point of pride for the empire, was the problem or the ever-present pressure point. You didn't want to be on the wrong side of the government, and for the Christians living in this place, there was one claim that they could not make, Cesar was not Lord; Jesus was.

And that's it right there. That claim, that single statement, not only caused so much tension but would lead to their persecution and the sanctioned theft of their goods, resources, and money. The Jewish people in this region knew what would happen to them if they were associated with this new religious movement. They knew that Rome was not patient or gracious when it came to acknowledging Cesar's divine position. Even if you didn't believe it, you had to say it and offer the sacrifices and offerings that confirmed it. But these Christians just wouldn't compromise on their belief. That left the Jews in this region in a precarious position, and everyone seemed to associate them with the Christians. So they had to take matters into their own hands. First social pressure and harassment, then, they got the authorities involved. These Christians weren't just a new religious movement in a religiously pluralistic place, and they were a threat to the Roman way of life. Rome agreed, and the persecution began.

It is to this situation that Jesus sends his message to the church in Smyrna. He reminds them to hold on, stay focused, and remain faithful. Why? Because he has already given them a victory that can't be taken away, and they need to keep their eyes on that prize. It reminds us of a truth that we all know well **when I aim at nothing, I'll hit it every time**. Faithfulness doesn't happen by accident, and faithful people stay focused and keep the goal in mind.

1. Smyrna – A Roman Stronghold

- a. Let's get to know the context.
 - i. **Smyrna (modern Izmir) was the second largest and reputedly the most beautiful city in Provincial Asia and is the only city of the seven that is still in existence today.** Smyrna was the first city of Asia to build a temple to *Roma*, the spirit of Rome, in 195 B.C. In John's day **it was a city that had been "resurrected from the dead," in that it had been destroyed 700 years earlier and had lain in ruins for 300 years.**¹
 - 1. This fact gives an interesting angle to the way Jesus describes himself. He is the eternal resurrected one, even as they were living in a "resurrected" place.
 - ii. The city stretched down the slopes of a mountain to the Aegean seacoast, where an excellent harbor saw steady traffic from ships engaged in commerce. **Associations of goldsmiths, winemakers, textile producers, and merchants contributed to the wealth of the city. The product of careful urban planning, Smyrna's streets were laid out in straight lines, some paved with stone and bordered by graceful colonnades.** The city boasted temples to the goddess Meter and other deities, as well as to the deified emperor Tiberius. As a cultural center, it had a good library and a shrine to the poet Homer. The Christian community was poor by comparison, although John declares that in Christ's eyes they are "rich" in faith (Rev. 2:9).²
 - iii. **It was one of the first cities to worship the Roman emperor and it won the honor of erecting a temple to him in the reign of Tiberius.** Indeed there was a temple to the goddess of Rome as early as 195 BC (Tacitus, *Ann.* iv.56; Barclay says this was the first in the world). **Smyrna was a faithful ally of Rome in the days before Rome was acknowledged in the region, so its loyalty meant something.**³
 - 1. With Smyrna being such a Roman stronghold (culturally and politically speaking) it would be no surprise that Christians would not feel as if they were on the outside looking in, but that they would face increasing pressure from their neighbors.

2. The One who cannot die.

- a. Let's unpack this image. (v.8)
 - i. What is up with the angel of the church?
 - 1. **It is a reminder that the church is both an earthly and a spiritual (heavenly) entity.**
 - 2. Does it mean that each church has a "guardian angel?" → This is possible and a position that some scholars take. The context coming out of chapter 1 and repeated to the church in Ephesus (2:1) make this position a little harder to defend / less clear.
 - 3. See additional notes below on angels.
 - ii. The message is from *the First and the Last* (cf. 1:17). **As in 1:18 this is linked with a reference to the resurrection**, very appropriate in a city which had died and now lived

¹ Steve Gregg, *Revelation, Four Views: A Parallel Commentary* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers, 1997), 66.

² Craig R. Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things*, Second Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 67.

³ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 67.

once more. In 1:18 the tense denotes continuity ('I am living'), whereas here the aorist tenses put the stress on the actual happenings: **'he became dead, and sprang to life again.'**⁴

1. Reminder: Smyrna was destroyed c. 580 BC, but c. 290 BC Lysimachus rebuilt it to a comprehensive plan. It was thus one of the very few planned cities of antiquity. Many writers comment on its beauty.⁵

- iii. He is the divine sovereign over history who alone possesses the attribute of eternity ("the first and the last"). Christ has revealed these divine traits through his resurrection from the dead (for discussion of the full significance of v 8b see above on 1:17b–18a). **His rule over history provides a basis of comfort to the church, which is suffering economic hardship because of Jewish slander.**⁶

1. This is why the image is so significant for them.

b. Why is this image of Jesus important to this church? → The problem at hand.

- i. The nature of persecution in the first century → **Situations were different at Smyrna and Philadelphia, where the congregations encountered overt hostility.**
- ii. Modern readers often assume that persecutions of Christians in the first centuries after Christ were massive campaigns that the imperial government carried out against Christians throughout the Roman Empire. They may imagine scenes in which Roman troops go door-to-door, dragging the faithful from their homes in order to throw them to the lions in the nearest Roman stadium. There is, however, little evidence that such systematic persecution was happening when Revelation was written. **In the first century, persecutions were generally instigated by the townspeople rather than by the imperial government, and they were local rather than empire-wide in scope.**⁷
 1. Of all the letters, that to Smyrna is the most brief and is one of only two (Smyrna and Philadelphia) that receives no rebuke nor call to repentance from Christ.⁸
- iii. Here in Smyrna, the persecution started locally (with neighbors) but quickly escalated to involve the Roman authorities. **(v.9) → Synagogue of Satan???**
 1. Smyrna had the largest Jewish population of any Asian city.⁹
 2. **Until the latter part of the first century Christianity enjoyed a degree of protection under the umbrella of Judaism, which was tolerated by Rome.** The Jews were not forced to worship Caesar as a god, but allowed to offer sacrifices in honor of emperors as rulers and not as gods (see further below on 2:24–25). But after the Neronian persecution Christianity came under suspicion, since new religions were not acceptable in the empire. **And Jews, who sometimes had no qualms in semi-revering other deities along with their OT God, often were only too willing to make the Roman authorities aware that the Christians were not a Jewish sect.**¹⁰

⁴ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale NT Commentaries (InterVarsity Press, 1987), 67.

⁵ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale NT Commentaries (InterVarsity Press, 1987), 67.

⁶ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 239.

⁷ Craig R. Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things*, Second Edition. (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 67.

⁸ Steve Gregg, *Revelation, Four Views: A Parallel Commentary* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers, 1997), 66.

⁹ Steve Gregg, *Revelation, Four Views: A Parallel Commentary* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers, 1997), 67.

¹⁰ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 240.

- a. This is likely what happened in Smyrna. The Jews there got tired of being associated with the Christians (whom they saw as heretics) and also felt the social / political pressure of their claim the “Jesus is Lord.”
 - b. Rome doesn’t share power, and so the Jewish neighbors began to stir up trouble for the Christians with the local authorities.
 - c. **However, this could hardly have been a surprise to the Christians. Jesus was executed as a political enemy, and following him, would only mean the same for them.**
3. The mention of Roman persecution in v 10 directly following that of Jewish slander conforms to historical reports of Jews allying with and encouraging Romans and Gentiles to oppress Christians (e.g., **Acts 13:45, 50; 14:2–7, 19; 17:5–9; 1 Thess. 2:14–16; Martyrdom of Polycarp** 12:1–2; 13:1; Tertullian, *Scorpiace* 10).¹¹
4. This pressure and distinctiveness will only be more apparent as Christians do not participate in the worship of the emperor cult.
 - a. Like in Ephesus, all of Asia Minor was structured around the emperor cult by the late first century. This was in many ways the lifeblood of social connections and the economy.
 - b. See additional notes below on the emperor cult.
- c. Why is it important to us today? **Christianity was truly distinctive here. → Is the same true in our community?**
 - i. The pressure and persecution that the Christians in Smyrna and even in all of Asia Minor (as we will see from the seven messages) was not to come as a surprise to them. That does not mean that it was not hard or traumatizing.
 1. **Note: We must resist the idea of glorifying persecution.** This is something we can be drawn to in the West where pressure is social but not like what many brothers and sisters experience in places that are closed to the gospel.
 - ii. **Questions for consideration:**
 1. **Are we surprised when the claims/values of Jesus put us at odds with the claims/values of the power structures of our day and age?**
 2. **Do I ever feel the tension of being a Christian in America, or does my worldview totally resolve all tension?**
 - iii. Christianity was truly distinctive in the first century and clearly in Smyrna.
 1. It created tension for the believers with the power structures because their hope was not in this world or in the kingdom of Rome.
 - a. **This is the same tension that Paul and Silas experienced in Philippi.**
 - b. You are disturbing our “Roman way of life.” (Acts 16)
 2. **We should perpetually be in a position of tension with the power structures and cultural values of this age because our hope and our values are in Jesus and Jesus alone.**
 - a. This does not mean disengagement from culture.
 - b. This does mean thoughtful, patient, enduring engagement so that Jesus would be made clear in our communities.
 - c. We do not abandon this world because God did not abandon it. Instead, he set out to redeem it.

¹¹ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 240.

3. **We desire to see our neighbors, friends, family members, and communities experience the abundance of life in Christ on this side of heaven, while knowing that we will not usher in a utopia through our efforts.** Only Jesus will restore all things, and while we wait for him to do that work, we are reminded that our afflictions are temporary and cannot take away what was given to us by him, the One who cannot die.
- iv. Because Jesus is the one who cannot die, and he offers his victory to us, we do not have to respond in fear.

3. Do not fear.

- a. Paul's word to Timothy in **2 Tim. 4:6** help us to understand the mentality and perspective that is experienced when hope is rooted in Christ, even in the face of suffering.
 - i. **⁶For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.**
 - ii. Paul is writing these words at the end of his life. → Closely linked with the preceding statement are the words, *and the time has come for my departure*, which also draw attention to the imminence of death. But the word translated *departure* (*analysis*) triumphantly expresses the apostle's view of the end; it is a 'loosing, e.g. of a vessel from its moorings or of a soldier striking his tent.¹²
 - iii. What might seem the end to Timothy appears to the apostle as a glorious new era when he will be released from all his present restrictions.¹³
 1. I.e., Paul is presently being poured out (going through suffering and preparing for death), but that is really the
 - iv. *Now there is in store for me.* The first word in the Greek is *loipon*, which draws attention to what still remains to be realized as contrasted with those things already accomplished (verse 7). *The crown of righteousness* is reminiscent not only of the wreaths of honour awarded to Olympic winners, but also of the awards made to loyal subjects by oriental sovereigns for services rendered (Dibelius cites an example from an inscription of Antiochus 1, where similar phraseology is used).¹⁴
- b. **We do not need to fear... Because we are seen.**
 - i. Being seen is an important message to this group of Christians. They are in a plight that is unbelievably hard.
 1. Religious disagreements turned into social pressure which resulted in political persecution.
 - a. Political persecution turned into martyrdom.
 2. 15- 20 years after this letter Polycarp was martyred.

¹² Donald Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 14, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 187.

¹³ Donald Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 14, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 187.

¹⁴ Donald Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 14, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 188.

3. **The account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, bishop of the church at Smyrna in the mid-second century, gives us a glimpse of the kind of threats that may have challenged the faith of that church in earlier years. He was told by the Roman governor that he would be executed if he did not give a public, token acknowledgment to Caesar as Lord.** He died for his faith. Some have suggested that Polycarp himself may have been one of the readers of this letter, since he became bishop of Smyrna in A.D. 115, and that he was particularly encouraged by its message before his death.¹⁵
- ii. **Jesus sees them in their struggle... And, he sees us too.**
1. **He knows their afflictions** – Christ’s knowledge of this church is concerned with the various kinds of trouble its members were undergoing. First is **afflictions** (actually *thlipsis* is singular), **which means serious trouble, the burden that crushes.**¹⁶
 2. **He knows their poverty** – John uses the strong word *ptōcheia*, which Trench distinguishes from *penia*: ‘The *penēs* has nothing superfluous, **the *ptochos* nothing at all.**’ The poverty of the Smyrneans was extreme.
 - a. **Many think that the Smyrneans’ poverty was in part due to pillage of their goods by the Jews. Christianity was not legally permitted, which made it easy for Jews or pagans to take action against believers.**
 - b. Such spiritual wealth in the midst of economic poverty is a trait not untypical of believers in exile on the earth (**2 Cor. 6:10; Jas. 2:5; 1 Cor. 1:26–29**).¹⁷
 - c.
 3. **He knows their slander (*blasphēmia*)** - The assembly of these slanders for worship did not gather together God’s people, but Satan’s, who is ‘the accuser of our brothers’ (12:10).¹⁸
 - a. The slander they faced was aimed at not only discrediting believers, but getting them arrested and put to death by the state.
- c. **We have the end not only in sight, but experienced in part now. (v. 10)**
- i. Again, faith is not blind in the biblical tradition / life of Jesus. → God gives us evidence to build our trust and obedience.
 1. Obedience is ultimately an exercise in trust. → I obey because I trust that the person giving me instructions or advice truly has my best in mind and the wisdom to back it up.
 - ii. The Smyrneans are not to be afraid, though suffering is certain. Some will be imprisoned, and this is ascribed to *the devil*. But God is supreme. Even through the devil and evil men he works out his purposes. The imprisonment will be *to test you*. **The clear implication is that God will see them through the test.**¹⁹

¹⁵ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 243.

¹⁶ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 67–68.

¹⁷ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 239.

¹⁸ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 68.

¹⁹ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 68.

- iii. Jesus tells them that their suffering is limited in time, duration, and the authority of those persecuting them.
 - 1. **Ten days (the time of Daniel's testing, Dan. 1:12–15)** may well point to the completion of their suffering: 'It is only for a limited time that you will have to endure, even though endurance will be tested to the limit' (Niles). It certainly points to something more than three and a half days, which is John's usual expression for a trial of limited duration. **Yet even ten has its limit. Not Satan but God has the last word.** ²⁰
- iv. **Victory is theirs** – now in part and in full in the age to come.
 - 1. The presence of this letter and the truth of Jesus' awareness of their situation is a reminder of God's abiding and faithful presence.
 - 2. They experience this presence as a sign of their victory.
 - a. **God's presence is not withheld for a "job well done," it is given and extended as a motivator for perseverance in righteousness.**
 - b. I.e., They taste now in part, what is to come in full.
 - 3. In a memorable expression the church is exhorted, **Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life (cf. Jas 1:12).** Death, which people fear so much, is set in sharp antithesis to life, which alone matters. There is an article with *life* (though not with *death*). It is '**the**' life, eternal life, that is in mind. *Crown (stephanos)* means a wreath or chaplet, and is to be distinguished from the royal crown (*diadēma*). **The stephanos was the trophy awarded to the victor at the games, and the same word was used of the festive garland worn at banquets by all the guests.**
 - a. Here it is plainly the victory wreath, which would be specially appropriate in Smyrna, **a city famous for its Games.** The believer who remains faithful even when it means death will receive the trophy of victory. His *crown* is *life*.²¹
- v. Again, the call to not fear is not some wishful maxim or divine command that really is a "work" of some sort that will earn them their salvation. The call to not fear is rooted in Jesus who he is, his presence, and ultimately his promises.
 - 1. **He sees them** – They are known in relationship and trials.
 - a. **He understands** – Jesus has walked this road too. (**Heb. 4:14-16**)
 - 2. **He has authority** – Their tribulations are limited. I.e., It isn't some endless cycle.
 - 3. **Victory is theirs** – Not earned by them, but given to them by Jesus, and the experience of that victory prompts them to press on.

4. Press On... Stay Focused

- a. **Just like in the letter to the Ephesians, there is a call to obedience and to persevere (struggle / conquer) in faithfulness.** (v.11)
 - i. For *He who has an ear ...*, see note on verse 7. The overcomer will not be harmed by *the second death* (explained in 20:6, 14; 21:8 in terms of the lake of fire; it seems to mean eternal punishment, the negation of eternal life). *Not* is an emphatic double negative.

²⁰ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 242.

²¹ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 68–69.

The overcomer will certainly not be harmed. **The emphasis would be welcome to those who faced the prospect of martyrdom.**²²

ii. **This military metaphor assumes that the faithful in each congregation are engaged in a struggle to remain faithful.**²³

1. Though it is not specified precisely what is to be overcome, John's other writings speak of both Jesus and the believer overcoming "the world" (John 16:33; 1 John 5:4–5). This implies the continued successful resistance of the world's corrupt moral and spiritual influence.²⁴

b. How do we stay focused?

i. We **remember** what God has done.

1. Remembering is an active posture – That means it requires intentionality and investment.
2. We remember the important things. → The things that are crucial to our futures, hopes, and wholeness.

ii. We **recite** what is true.

1. **We need to be intentional to recite the truth to overcome the lies.**

- a. The only thing that defeats a lie is the truth.
- b. Lies are like shifting shadows that cause us to perceive things in ways that they aren't.
 - i. Ever have this happen to you as a kid? A shadow in a dimly lit place caused you great fear?
 - ii. Then, you turned the lights on, and all of a sudden, it wasn't so scary after all? → We have this experience camping with our kids all the time.
- c. God's Word is absolute and foundational truth. → It defeats every lie that the enemy wants to use to separate us from God's presence.
 - i. Romans 8 - I've heard it said that in this one chapter alone, Paul confronts every lie that humanity buys into.

2. Remember from the message to the Ephesians - **Unsound doctrine is only a generation or two away.**

- a. **It is possible that John is addressing a second generation in the Ephesian church that had failed to maintain the witnessing fervor of the first generation.**

iii. We **recognize** that faithfulness is about doing the next right and Godly thing.

1. Faithfulness is not an activity of perfection, nor is it to be dismissed as something that does not matter.
 - a. We tend to go to one of these two extremes while the truth is in the middle.
2. Faithful people are marked so by doing the next right Godly thing. → Don't get overwhelmed and waylaid by worrying about things that are days, weeks, or months ahead of you. → Do the next right Godly thing.
3. Faithfulness is an activity that requires our intentionality. When we aim at nothing, we'll hit it every time.

²² Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale NT Commentaries (InterVarsity Press, 1987), 69.

²³ Craig R. Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things*, Second Edition. (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 61.

²⁴ Steve Gregg, *Revelation, Four Views: A Parallel Commentary* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers, 1997), 65.

Additional notes:

The reality of the emperor cult:

- Indeed, the imperial cult permeated virtually every aspect of city and often even village life in Asia Minor, so that individuals could aspire to economic prosperity and greater social standing only by participating to some degree in the Roman cult. Citizens of both upper and lower classes were required by local law to sacrifice to the emperor on various special occasions, and sometimes even visitors and foreigners were invited to do so. City officials were so dedicated to the cult that they even distributed money to citizens from public funds to pay for sacrifices to the emperor (in, for example, Ephesus). It was almost impossible to have a share in a city's public life without also having a part in some aspect of the imperial cult. Pressure on Christians to conform to such participation would have increased during Domitian's reign (81–96 A.D.). Those refusing to participate were seen as politically disloyal and unpatriotic and would be arrested and punished according to Roman law (e.g., exile, capital punishment). But genuine Christians could never call anyone Lord except Christ.²⁵

On the Angels:

- So it is suggested that the expression may point to the essential 'spirit' of the churches. Thus Swete can say: 'In this symbolical book the angel of a Church may be simply an expression for its prevailing spirit, and thus be identified with the Church itself', and Sweet: 'the churches seen as spiritual entities'.²⁶ → There are difficulties in the way of all views, but perhaps fewest in that of seeing the *angels* as the spirits of the churches, standing for and symbolizing the churches.
- Corporate representation (i.e., heavenly and earthly) - The fuller reason for addressing the churches through their representative angels is to remind the churches that already a dimension of their existence is heavenly, that their real home is not with the unbelieving "earth dwellers" (cf. "earth dwellers" in 3:10 and *passim*), and that they have heavenly help and protection in their struggle not to be conformed to their pagan environment. **And one of the purposes of the church meeting on earth in its weekly gatherings (e.g., 1:3, 9) is to be reminded of its heavenly existence and identity by modeling its worship and liturgy on the angels' and heavenly church's worship of the exalted Lamb.**²⁷

²⁵ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 240–241.

²⁶ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 61.

²⁷ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 218.