THE FUNCTION OF ΛΟΙΠΟΣ IN
THE LETTER TO THYATIRA

LESLEY N. POLLARD
Loma Linda University
Loma Linda, California

This examination of λοιπός (i.e., “remnant, rest”) in Rev 2:24 demonstrates that the foundational themes associated with the remnant of Rev 12:17 are presented as a prolepsis within the letter to Thyatira. The localized conflict between the “Jezebel” figure and the λοιπός in Thyatira anticipates the author’s globalization of the war against the remnant of Rev 12:17 by Queen Babylon and the enemy powers presented in the latter half of the book.

Literary Setting of λοιπός
in Revelation 2:24

A significant amount of scholarly research has been conducted on the epistolary section of Revelation found in chapters 2 and 3.¹ That the fourth letter of the series, to Thyatira (Rev 2:18-27), sits within Revelation’s epistolary material is not only self-evident, but is widely supported by scholarship.²


While the epistolary character of Rev 2–3 has been attested, some scholars have argued that the literary character of epistolary chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation is better expressed as “prophetic letters.” That conclusion is organized around the recurrence of the phrase Τάδε λέγει ("thus says") (see 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). This royal pronouncement formula appears in the royal decrees and imperial edicts of Roman magistrates and emperors. D. W. Hadorn thought that this prophetic announcement was reminiscent of Amos 2–3.5

However, recent research on the letters has set aside many earlier source-and form-critical proposals in favor of a “prophetic letter” model that accounts for the influence of Graeco-Roman epistolary forms containing material shaped by the prophetic concerns of Revelation’s inaugural vision. In fact, a number of scholars assert that the letters in Rev 2–3 do not rigidly replicate the broad features of any ancient literary form. In this appraisal, the pattern of the

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6David Aune, Revelation 1–5, WBC 52a (Dallas: Word, 1997), 126-130; Ernst Lohmeyer, Offenbarung des Johannes (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1926), 21.


seven letters follows a basic literary schema. Most important for this examination, literary-sensitive scholarship on the seven churches has pointed to a literary chiasm in which Rev 2:24 sits within the central panel of a literary septet and thus forms the apex of the chiasmic structure seen in Rev 2–3. The chiasmic structure of the seven letters may help explain the riddle of why the longest letter is sent to the smallest city. The central message to Thyatira contains threats of judgment and the accompanying promise of the salvation of a remnant. This threat-promise formula constitutes the fundamental binomium essential to the presence of


a Ephesus—loss of identity
b Smyrna—faithful through persecution
c Pergamum—some faithful, some compromised
d Thyatira—some faithful, some compromised
c' Sardis—some faithful, some compromised
b' Philadelphia—faithful through persecution
a' Laodicea—Loss of identity
However, a more detailed chiasm would reflect the fact that 2:23-24 contains one element that is missing from every other letter—a reference that “all the churches will know” of the judgment/salvation activity of the living Christ (emphasis supplied). That structure is as follows:

a Ephesus—a loss of spiritual passion ("You have left your first love") (2:4)
b Smyrna—faithful through persecution (2:9-10)
c Pergamum—majority faithful, but some compromised (2:13-16)
d Thyatira—judgment/salvation of God’s λαός (2:23-24)
c' Sardis—few faithful, but majority compromised (3:1-4)
b' Philadelphia—faithful through trial (3:8, 10)
a' Laodicea—a loss of spiritual passion ("I am rich and need nothing") (3:17)

For more discussion on the chiasm in the seven churches, cf. Johnson, 69, who sees two triads, with Thyatira serving as the central hinge. See also Kiddle, 19-20, who divides the churches into three paired groups—healthy, impaired, and bankrupt of spiritual qualities. Stefanovic, 76, compares the letter structure to the Jewish seven-branched lamp stand, thus centralizing the Thyatiran letter.

11 Colin J. Hemer says that “The longest and most difficult letter is addressed to the least known, least important, and least remarkable of the cities” (The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting, JSNTSup 11 [Nashville: JSNT Press, 1986], 106).
the remnant theme found in OT prophetic literature. Further, the importance of Thyatira and its remnant message is also seen in two constants that relate to the \( \lambda \alpha \iota \pi \nu \zeta \) of 2:24: the \( \omega \lambda \alpha \epsilon \) (knowledge) of Christ that embraces the faithful remnant, and the encouragement to \( \delta \nu \kappa \gamma \omega \nu \) (the “overcomer”). Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza’s observation that the letters are “proclamations of Christ to the whole Church” may be seen in these constants that transform the letters into more than restricted local epistles, but translocal communiques to the wider church in Asia.

Further, John’s intent that the drama occurring in Thyatira provide instruction for the rest of the churches in Asia Minor is seen in the single occurrence of the expression “and all the churches will know.” This phrase refers to the judgment/salvation activity of the living Christ outlined in Rev 2:24-25. This one-time announcement indicates that the centrality of the judgment/salvation announcement within Thyatira is intended heuristically. Such universality of instruction/exhortation is further reinforced in the auditory formula “whoso hath ears, let him hear.” This formula called persons in each of the seven Asian churches to heed the risen Christ’s message to each local church. In addition to connecting the churches, Greg K. Beale correctly


Beale points to Christ the Judge in 2:23 as central (Revelation, 227). I observe that the presence of a faithful \( \lambda \alpha \iota \pi \nu \zeta \) in 2:24 brings together the judgment and salvation binomium of 2:23-24.

13These two constants, appearing in every letter, are therefore “supra” contextual. They both transcend the local situations addressed and link the local contexts to each other.


15See Stephen L. Homcy, “To Him Who Overcomes: A Fresh Look at What ‘Victory’ Means for the Believer according to the Book of Revelation,” JETS 38/2 (1995): 194. Homcy posits three convincing arguments for believing that the seven churches represent the entire historical church: seven is the number of completeness; the refrain to each church is “He who has an ear, let him hear”; and experience tells us that the kind of issues addressed are found in the church throughout all ages.
describes how “The hearing formula was one of the means by which he [Christ] called out the remnant from among the compromising churches.” Thus the commendation and the explicit elevation of the λοιπός in 2:24 was instructive for all the churches in Asia Minor. The faithfulness commended in Thyatira is the radical faithfulness expected in the other Asian churches.

Next, we turn to a closer look at the historical setting and theological backgrounds to the remnant in the church at Thyatira. This research has identified two significant backgrounds that influence the reading of 2:24: the influence of the trade guilds on the corruptions affecting the Thyatiran community, and the evocative influence of the Elijah-Jezebel confrontation of the OT on understanding λοιπός in Rev 2:24. To these backgrounds we turn.

**Historical Setting of λοιπός in Thyatira:**

**Trade Guilds as Civic Background**

Thyatira was well known for its commerce and trade guilds. Guilds had a patron god. William M. Ramsay’s research of ancient inscriptions found that Thyatira had more trade guilds than any other Asian city. These Thyatiran guilds, however, proved problematic for the faith and practice of the Christian population. Leon Morris explained their influence:

> The strong trade guilds in this city would have made it very difficult for any Christian to earn his living without belonging to a guild. But membership involved attendance at guild banquets, and this in turn meant eating meat which had first been sacrificed to an idol. . . . That these meals all too readily degenerated into sexual looseness made matters worse.

Morris, as did Charles H. Talbert, rightfully connected the presence of the trade guilds to the economic stability of many in the church at Thyatira. Ben Witherington III saw that in Thyatira “there would be considerable economic pressure on Christians.” Why? Because the guilds were centers for both

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16Beale, John’s Use, 310. Beale also demonstrates how the hearing formulas were especially designed according to Ezek 3:27 to call the righteous remnant (ibid., 308-310).


18Hemer, 109.

19William M. Ramsay, The Letters to the Seven Churches in Asia and Their Place in the Plan of the Apocalypse (London: Hodder and Stouton, 1906), 324.

20Ladd, 50, writes: “It would be nearly impossible for a citizen to participate in trade and industry without membership in the appropriate guild, and the question naturally arose whether a Christian could properly participate in such meals.”

21Morris, 71.


23Witherington, 104.
William Hendricksen states that “You [Thyatiran believers] will be expected to attend the guild-festivals and to eat food, part of which is offered to the tutelary deity . . . then, when the feast ends, and the real—grossly immoral—fun begins, you must not walk out unless you desire to become the object of ridicule and persecution!” (More Than Conquerors: An Interpretation of the Book of Revelation [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965], 71).

Talbert, 20. He writes that “If, in Pergamum, Christians’ lives are threatened by the pervasiveness of the imperial cult, here their economic well being is threatened if their participation in the sacrifices by the guilds is not forthcoming.” Refusal to participate would have forced Christians out of their society’s mainstream social events. See also Ramsay MacMullen, Paganism in the Roman Empire (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 34-42.

Elijah’s lonely protest, “I alone am left” (1 Kgs 19:10 cf. Rom 11:2, 3), as well as the divine response, “I have seven thousand who have not bowed the knee” (1 Kgs 19:18; cf. Rom 11:4), establish this as a locus classicus, an anchor passage for remnant teaching.

remnant in Rev 2:24. The λοιπός in 2:24 represents the future continuity of the church after the judgment promised upon Jezebel and her followers in 2:22-23.

According to 1 Kgs 16–21, OT Jezebel was a wicked tyrant whose influence helped corrupt her husband Ahab and consequently signaled a war on the remnant of the nation of Israel by promoting idolatry and pagan worship. According to Lehman Strauss, in the annals of Hebrew sacred history, “Her very name has come to be associated with evil.”

However, John uses Jezebel in the OT as a “prototype” of Jezebel of Thyatira. John used “a code-name” intended to indicate a religious and ideological affinity with the OT namesake. As a self-named “prophetess,” she claimed direct authority from God. Jezebel of Thyatira taught “the deep things of Satan” (v. 24). Though the text is not explicit, there are many suggestions as to what the background to τὰ βαθεὰ τοῦ σατανά might be. Lexically, τὰ βαθεὰ is a substantive that describes insights beyond the ordinary sensory ken of human beings.

George Beasley-Murray thought that τὰ βαθεὰ pointed to an “emancipation from traditional ethics” with a power to explore “hell, as well as heaven.” One proposal suggests that “deep things” represents a seminal gnosticism. Robert H. Mounce and R. H. Charles thought that the background may be with the teachers of magical formulas used to control spirits. G. B. Caird saw a policy of conformity to satanic mystery religions that parodied Paul. Gerhard A. Krodel thought that the “deep things” may have been Jezebel’s claim to esoteric experience.

To stay with the context as the primary reference, it seems that “deep things” may have been the positive evaluation that the followers of Jezebel had of Jezebel.
Beale, John’s Use, 264.

The epistle of 1 John had already entered into a polemic against persons claiming that they were without and could not sin (1 John 1:8, 10; 3:4-6, 8, 9). Several of these themes are documented by Leslie Pollard (“The Function of Loipos in Contexts of Judgment and Salvation in the Book of Revelation [Ph.D dissertation, Andrews University, 2007], 79-94).

Robert L. Thomas, Revelation 1–7: An Exegetical Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1993), 208-209. Consonance between Revelation’s appropriation of this deific title and the title of Christ used in John’s Gospel is evident (see John 1:34, 49; 3:18; 5:25; 10:36; 11:4, 27; 20:31). However, Charles thinks that this title was influenced by Ps 2:7-8 since a later reference to this passage occurs. The rationale behind the use of this title may be twofold: John F. Walvoord surmised


Interpretation of Revelation 2:24

Revelation 2:24 is interpreted under five captions evident in the themes germaine to OT remnant teaching: separation, opposition, resistance, judgment, and salvation.

Understanding λοιπός as

Separation in Thyatira

Christ introduces himself as Ὅ ὁ θεοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ. This is the only time in the Apocalypse that this Christological title is used, though it occurs 46 times in the NT. Jesus claimed this relationship to the Father during his ministry in Matt 11:27; 26:63-64; and Luke 10:22. Traces of the deific significance of this title may be seen in Rev 1:6; 2:27-28; 3:5, 21; and 14:1. However, Charles thinks that this title was influenced by Ps 2:7-8 since a later reference to this passage occurs. The rationale behind the use of this title may be twofold: John F. Walvoord surmised
that the severity of Thyatira's situation called for a "reiteration of His deity," while Caird sees an apologetic agenda behind the use of the title since Domitian asserted his emperor cults around the empire. These two options—one internal to the church, the other external—are, in fact, complimentary. This unique title connects the Thyatiran community and the remnant of 2:24 to the deific Christ referenced in the victorious language of Ps 2. This connection to the deific Christ portends victory for the persecuted but faithful remnant of Thyatira since the victory of Christ is imaged throughout the book (see, e.g., 5:5-6; 12:1-7; 14:1-3; 19:11-21).

The deeds of the Thyatira church point to four concrete qualities that are derived from the Spirit (cf. 2:19; Gal 5:22-23). In this list of four qualities, endurance is most significant because the word ὑπομονήν ("endurance," "steadfastness," "perseverance") is consistently associated with the remnant in the context of salvation in the Apocalypse. Ὑπομονήν functions as an evocative image (i.e., an internal "trigger") in the Apocalypse. When ὑπομονήν appears, remnant subject matter is evoked (cf. 1:9; 2:2, 3, 19; 3:10; 13:10; 14:12).

And how does λοιπός function in Thyatira? The first time in the book of Revelation that the exalted Christ speaks τοῖς λοιποῖς ("to the remnant") is in v. 24. He commends them for their willingness to stand apart from the rest of the church. Walvoord comments correctly on the separation of the remnant from the general church:

"John F. Walvoord, A Revelation of Jesus Christ (Chicago: Moody, 1966), 72. According to Walvoord, "The chief point of distinction in this description of Christ is that He is named the Son of God in contrast to the designation in chapter 1." Sweet, 93, sees closeness to the Father "in activity and function." Beckwith, 465, and Beasley-Murray, 90, thought that the title might connect with the royal Ps 2 used in v. 27. George E. Ladd sees in the title a correlation between his relationship to the Father and "divine works—the works of God himself" (Theology of the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974], 248).

"Caird, 43; Mouce, 102. Aune cites a letter from Augustus that began: Αὐτοκράτορ Καίσαρ θεοῦ Ἰουλίου υἱός ("Emperor Caesar, son of the God Julius") (Revelation 1–5, 202).


"John considers himself a brother "in ὑπομονήν" (1:9). In 2:2, 3, ὑπομονήν is characteristic of the Ephesian church and is related with hard work and labor. Here in 2:19, ὑπομονήν is associated with service. In 3:10, it is associated with Jesus' command for patience. Ὑπομονήν in 13:10 and 14:12 relates to the faithfulness of the persecuted saints.

"Morris, 73, sees the λοιπός as "true believers" who have not been led astray by Jezebelian doctrine.

"Aune shows that the remnant of 2:24 is addressed as "a particular group within the congregation" (Revelation 1–5, 120). This is seen in a narrative shift of address from the dative singular ἐγγέλος of 2:18 to direct address to the audience through use of the dative plural τοῖς λοιποῖς.
It is significant that having brought into judgment those who were evil in the church of Thyatira a special word is given to the godly remnant in this church. Here for the first time in the messages to the seven churches a group is singled out within a local church as being the continuing true testimony of the Lord. The godly remnant is described as not having or holding the doctrine of Jezebel and as not knowing “the depths” or the deep things of Satan.50

In Thyatira, separation is necessary because the church consists not only of the remnant (τοῖς ὁσιοῖς, v. 24), but also of Jezebel (v. 20), her followers (v. 22), and her children (v. 23).51 This “twoness” of the church might reflect the ecclesial-division sayings of Jesus (e.g., Matt 13:25-30, 38-40). Jacques Ellul writes perceptively that “there is a certain division between the members of the Church: The physical assembly of the Church contains members that Jesus Christ does not recognize as his own.”52 Such separation is inherent in the affirmation of the remnant.

Thus the first fact associated with the term ὁσιοῖς in the context of salvation is that the professing general church is not identical with the remnant. Revelation 2:20-24 exposes members belonging to the Thyatiran church who are not members of the remnant.53 The remnant, therefore, is within Thyatira and is distinguished from the permissive general church of Thyatira (ἀφετές, in v. 20). The ὁσιοῖς is a separate and distinct54 class of the faithful in Thyatira.55

We turn next to the points of contact between Jezebel and Queen Babylon in Rev 17 and 18 to show how these images relate to each other. Then we will examine how Jezebel and Queen Babylon will meet remnant resistance associated with ὑπομονήν.

50Walvoord, 76 (emphasis supplied).
51Jezebel of the OT was part of Israel due to her marriage to Ahab. As the prototype, therefore, Jezebel of Thyatira was also part of that church.
52Robert Bratcher and Howard A. Hatton write: “Some interpreters take children here to mean ‘followers.’ It may be better to stay with the literal meaning of the word; in this case her children are those she had by her lovers” (A Handbook on the Revelation to John [New York: United Bible Societies, 1993], 29).
54Paul B. Duff sees “inter-Christian problems” in Thyatira (Who Rides the Beast? Prophetic Rivalry and the Rhetoric of Crisis in the Churches of the Apocalypse [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001], 40). However, that the rivalry takes moral overtones is evidenced by the curse formula in 2:21. The opposition led by Jezebel is, in fact, nonapostolic resistance.
55Thomas, 226. He notes that the fact that because many “do not have this teaching,” it is thus the first way to clarify the identity of “the rest.”
56Barr, 58, points to a division in the community at Thyatira. Paul Minear considered Thyatira “another divided congregation” (I Saw a New Earth: An Introduction to the Visions of the Apocalypse [Washington, DC: Corpus, 1968], 55).
Understanding the Opposition of the λοιπός by Jezebel

Consistent with a 1 Kings 18 background, the remnant of Thyatira are opposed by Jezebel, but they resist her teachings. Later in the book, resistance to the end-time remnant will come from a global Jezebel. It is clear that there are numerous parallels between oppositional Jezebel at Thyatira and Queen Babylon in Rev 17 and 18. Jezebel of Thyatira threatened the remnant by teaching believers two errors: to fornicate, and to eat food offered to idols. The Balaamites (a derogatory name for the Nicolaitans?) also taught their followers to eat food offered to idols and to practice fornication (cf. 2:14-15). Parallels between Jezebel and Queen Babylon are displayed in Table 1.

First, the Jezebel and Queen Babylon images occur in the context of judgment, where we find strong verbal parallels in the nexus between 2:20 and 18:33. Here both Jezebel and Babylon πλαστεύω (“practice deception”). Jezebel “deceives” God’s local servants and Queen Babylon “deceives” all the nations. The trajectory between these two passages is from local to globalized deception. Therefore, Jezebel’s deceit is correctly seen by Beale as “none other than Babylon herself in the midst of the church.”

At the point of character, Jezebel and Queen Babylon are both presented as sexually promiscuous in 2:23 and 17:15. The same root stem πορν (πορνεύω and ἡ πόρνη) is used to describe their activities. Some commentators take 2:23 to preclude sexual sin in favor of a spiritual application. For instance, Caird thinks that the OT Jezebel was not immoral and, therefore, sees 2:23 as spiritual apostasy. Aune also thinks that the meaning here is apostasy.

However, while fornication has been an established OT metaphor for spiritual apostasy, given what we know about local guilds and local life in Thyatira there is no reason to believe that real believers could not have been literal participants in the sexual immorality associated with Thyatiran guild culture. Thomas said correctly: “The sins of participation in idolatrous feasts and sexual immorality were so characteristic of the pagan surroundings in Asia Minor that a literal sense is preferable.” While I agree with Thomas on the probability of the erotic seduction of believers, such an affirmation still recognizes the symbolic nature of the physical acts condemned in 2:20. Otherwise, another metaphor for Jezebeleanism might be more useful.

56 Caird, 44.
57 Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 204.
58 Concepts of unfaithfulness described as images of harlotry are common in the OT; cf. Hos 1:9: “Rejoice not, O Israel . . . for you have played the harlot, forsaking your God.” See also, e.g., Jer 3:6 and Ezek 23:19.
59 So Thomas, 191, who speaks of Pergamum and the same charge against the Nicolaitans.
60 Cf. Mounce, 104, who says rightly: “Since the eating of ‘things sacrificed to idols’
is undoubtedly intended in a literal sense, it is best to take ‘commit fornication’ in the
same way.” Ironically, no commentator has read “spiritualized” into the meat offered
to idols mentioned in the passage—only the “fornication.”

"Beale, John’s Use, 311-312.

TABLE 1
JEZEBEL OF THYATIRA AND QUEEN BABYLON PARALLELS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parallel</th>
<th>Jezebel</th>
<th>Queen Babylon</th>
<th>Texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theological Context</td>
<td>Judgment</td>
<td>Judgment</td>
<td>2:22/18:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Assessment</td>
<td>False Prophetess “deceives”</td>
<td>False Prophetess “deceives”</td>
<td>2:20/18:23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation/ Appearance</td>
<td>Implied attractiveness: “seduces my servants”</td>
<td>Outwardly attired in “purple” and “scarlet”</td>
<td>2:20/17:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Character</td>
<td>Harlot/Adulterer</td>
<td>Harlot/Adulterer</td>
<td>2:23/17:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultic Practices</td>
<td>Eats defiled food</td>
<td>Drinks human blood</td>
<td>2:20/17:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OT Name</td>
<td>Jezebel</td>
<td>Babylon</td>
<td>2:20/17:5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities toward the people of God</td>
<td>persecutes God’s people</td>
<td>persecutes God’s people</td>
<td>2:20/17:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divine Sentence: Destruction</td>
<td>“I will cast her into a bed of suffering.”</td>
<td>“Will be cast into the sea”</td>
<td>2:22/18:21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure for Judgment</td>
<td>“according to your deeds”</td>
<td>repaid “according to her deeds”</td>
<td>2:23/18:6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These and other points of contact in the table above present a picture of Jezebel as the local personification of a global system of opposition to God’s global people—Queen Babylon. Thus in 18:4 God’s people are exhorted to “Come out of her, my people” (cf. Jer 51:45), “touch not the unclean thing,” (cf. Isa 52:11), and thus “partake not of her plagues.” Beale is correct that “Jezebel more precisely represents the apostate sector of the church through which the religious-economic system of the ungodly . . . makes its incursions into the church and establishes a fifth columnist movement.”

Understanding λοιπός as Active Resistance in Thyatira
In the OT, the Jezebel figure further highlights the remnant’s resistance to idolatry. The OT background (1 Kgs 17–18) evokes a special feature of the remnant in the Apocalypse. Schüssler Fiorenza saw in the ἀναγνώστης associated with λοιπός the “consistent resistance” or “staying power” of the saints. This same opposition to Jezebel points to the “remnant resistance” lodged in Thyatira. Simon Kistemaker attributed their stance to the fact that they “adhered to the scriptures.” Beale rightly viewed this resistance in their decision “to continue holding fast their noncompromising stand until he comes.” The image of Jezebel places remnant resistance in the context of worship. The Jezebel image points the reader of the Apocalypse to the challenge and conflict between Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (1 Kgs 18:16-40).

At the center of the OT Carmel confrontation is allegiance to God or Baal. The choice before Israel was to worship idols or to worship God. The same issue of worship and allegiance to God is at the heart of the letter to Thyatira. As Jezebel, by her teaching and influence, had plunged Israel into idolatry, so in Thyatira Jezebel personified a system of belief whose presence undermined allegiance to God.

But the remnant in Thyatira represent determined resistance to doctrinal deviation. The resistance forces in Thyatira are described as “not having” her teaching. The word in v. 24 for “have” is ἔχει, which across its more than 700
usages in the NT displays a remarkable array of meaning.\footnote{Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon, “"Εξω,” Libronix Digital Library (Ontario, CA: Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1995).} From “to have” to “holding” to “keeping,” this word (here combined with the particle of negation, ὀκ) conveys the sense of “not holding fast” or “not adhering to” Jezebel’s teaching in 2:24. According to Talbert, the text shows that the remnant refuse to assimilate.\footnote{Talbert, 20.}

This first usage of λατεστες, therefore, should be seen as both proleptic and paradigmatic as it anticipates those who later in the book form a resistant coalition of end-time saints refusing to conform to the economic persecution of the dragon, beast, and false prophet (12:17; 14:12; 15:1-4; 20:4).

Understanding λατεστες as Survivors of Judgment

Λατεστες is also associated with the survival of the Thyatiran promise of judgment, both local (2:22) and eschatological (2:26). Thyatira faces rebuke because of its tolerance of Jezebel.\footnote{Witherington, 104, connects the mistaken tolerance for Jezebel to the fact that the Thyatirans had grown in love.} Jezebel personifies locally in Thyatira the synoptic apocalypse’s warnings against pseudoprophets (cf. Matt 24:4-5, 11, 24; Mark 13:5-6, 22). Jezebel, along with those Thyatirans responsive to her teaching will receive a “punishment befitting the crime.”\footnote{D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, and G. J. Wenham, New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition, 4th ed. (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1994), 1,430.} Similar to the history of Jezebel in the OT narrative, refusal to repent brings retributive justice and judgment.\footnote{Morris, 72.} Indeed, “The entire group of her followers will be brought to an end, and all the churches will know by experience what they already know in theory, that the Lord searches hearts and minds and repays according to deeds.”\footnote{Ramsay, Letters to the Seven Churches, 245; Morris, 70.}

Once again, we meet the judgment theme in the Apocalypse, but, in this case, the remnant are promised eschatological survival/reward based on their faithfulness. Compared to the rebuke to Ephesus (“You have forsaken your first love,” 2:4), an acknowledgment to Thyatira (“You are now doing more than you did at first,” 2:19), is quite significant. Whereas Ephesus has fallen away from its original spirit and enthusiasm, Thyatira has grown in love, faith, service, and patience.\footnote{Witherington, 104 connects the mistaken tolerance for Jezebel to the fact that the Thyatirans had grown in love.}

This leads to the final theme associated with λατεστες in Thyatira—salvation. To this final dimension of λατεστες in 2:24 we now turn.
Understanding the λοιπός as Recipients of Salvation

Interestingly, the hope of eschatological salvation comes to the remnant of Thyatira in the form of a parousia promise: “Only hold fast to what you have until I come” (v. 25). Numerous commentators see v. 25 as the second coming of Christ. In the messages to the seven churches, the idea of “coming” occurs five times. Three times the “coming” to the churches indicates judgment (2:5, 16; 3:3). Such judgment appears to be a coming prior to the parousia, but does not preclude final judgment.

In Thyatira and Philadelphia, two parousia promises are made in 2:25 and 3:11 to two distinct communities, respectively. The word for “come” in 2:25 is ἐλθω. The NT employs this term in decidedly eschatological terms. This promise in Revelation is associated with the λοιπός of Thyatira at the eschaton/parousia (v. 25).

The expression ὁ δὲ in 2:24 clarifies the identity of “the rest (remnant).” But the remnant are characterized by the fact that they do not hold to or

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80This is evident in Rev 2:16, where the church in Pergamum is told to repent in 2:16, but, at the same time, Christ promises to come against them with the “sword of his mouth.” This imagery is clearly parousia-associated in 19:11.

81See Johannes Schneider, who states: “In the NT the word is used predominantly of the eschatological coming to salvation and judgment. Jesus looks forward (Mt. 8:11; Lk. 13:29) to the future of the kingdom of God and sees the Gentiles too having a share in it. In the same sense Mt. 24:14 contains a reference to the progress of eschatological events. First the Gospel will be preached in all the world and then the end will come. Revelation attests to the return of Christ in the word of the exalted Lord: ἐλθω (Rev. 2:25; 3:3). In 2 Pet 3:10 the coming day of the Lord is announced with the terrible cosmic events which accompany it” (ο" Ηχω, TDNT 2:927).

82Thomas, 225-226, states: “The second person pronoun ὑμῖν (‘you’) names the addressees of Christ’s word of comfort, a designation that is further defined by the adjective λύπα (‘the rest’). This marks the faithful as those who had not been deceived by the cunning of Jezebel (cf. 1 Kings 19:18). The adjective does not necessitate that the remnant be in a minority. Possibly they were a majority in the church in light of the Lord’s praise for the church in 2:19. The group thus named is distinguished in two ways: they do not have the erroneous doctrine of Jezebel, and they have not known the deep things of Satan.”

83Thomas, 230, says: “Κρατεῖν is a common metaphor to describe strict adherence to a tradition or teaching either in a good sense (cf. 2 Thess 2:15; Rev 2:13; 3:11) or in
participate in Jezebel’s “deep things.” The expression τὰ βαθύτατα indicates that
the remnant are the ones who have not known the deep things of Satan. 83 Τὰ
βαθύτατα (“the deep things”) is a substantive that designates matters that are
hidden and beyond human scrutiny. 84 “It amounts to a claim of esoteric
knowledge, perhaps even a superior morality, a higher law. If man [ὁ ἄνθις] is to
know them, he must have supernatural help.” 85 The remnant do not know the
deep things of Satan and hence refuse to participate in false worship or any type
of Gnostic or mystery cult. 86

Further, the remnant is connected to two phenomena. While the adulterers
are cursed by the Son of God (vv. 22-23), the salvation of the remnant is
stipulated (vv. 24-25). 87 Judgment and salvation are implicitly juxtaposed by use
of the same verb βάλλω (“to cast,” “to put”), that appears twice in this unit.
Regarding Jezebel, Christ says: “I will cast her onto a sickbed (v. 22, emphasis
supplied). This points in the direction of judgment. To the remnant he says: “I
will not cast another burden” (v. 24, emphasis supplied). 88 This promise
echoes the language of the Apostolic council. 89 The futuristic present of this
a bad sense (cf. Mark 7:3; 8; Rev 2:14, 15).”

83Sweet, 96, thought that “deep things” could be an allusion to an incipient, proto-
Gnosticism: “A gnostically influenced Christian might indeed boast experience of the
deep things of Satan because his ‘knowledge’ told him such things were unreal and
harmless, or because he was so sure of his sinlessness that he considered himself
immune—‘beyond good and evil.’” The Ophites, who worshiped the serpent, and later
Gnostic sects such as the Cainites, Carpocratians, and Naasenes may be counted among
them. The remnant, however, composed a class of people who had not experienced the
alleged deeper knowledge.

84C. L. Grimm, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (New York: Scribner’s,
1901), s.v. “Bathos.”

85Thomas, 227.

86See also Alford, 4:576; Charles, 1:73; A. T. Robertson, Word Pictures of the New
Testament, 6 vols. (Nashville: Broadman, 1933), 6:410; and Thomas, 226, who all believe
that ὁτικοῖς refers to a class or quality of persons.

87Thomas, 230. “The best explanation is that the ‘burden’ upon the faithful is that
of resisting the pressure of Jezebel and her group. Choosing to abstain from her evil
practices doubtless resulted in ridicule. Christ promises to place upon them no burden
other that continuing to stand against her.”

88Walvoord, 76. “To the godly remnant, then, Christ gives a limited responsibility.
The evil character of the followers of Jezebel is such that they are beyond reclaim, but
the true Christians are urged to hold fast to what they already have and await the
coming of the Lord.”

89Merrill Tenney sees the Jerusalem Council behind the “no other burden” phrase
(Interpreting Revelation [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957], 63). Morris, 73, thinks that the
phrase suggests no other burden of service. Morris’s suggestion seems unlikely,
however, since there is no evidence that the graces they were commended for constituted a burden.
verb expresses a “confident assertion about what is going to take place in the future [which] is looked upon as so certain that it is thought of as already occurring.”

In the context of salvation, this first appearance of λοιπός indicates that the remnant is not exclusive. It is open to all in Thyatira who accept the call to repent. The strongest criticism of Jezebel is her refusal to repent. Repentance is twice offered to the idolaters (vv. 21-22). Interestingly, no adjective such as μικρόν (cf. Rev 17:1) or ὀλίγον (cf. 12:12) is connected with Jezebel’s χρόνον. Frederick J. Murphy points out that Jezebel’s “time to repent” implies some sort of probationary period prior to her judgment. This suggests a period of generous duration. Henry Barclay Swete concluded that Jezebel’s heretical activity transpired over an extended period. Apparently, Jezebel had been appealed to for some length of time. In fact, the language is very clear: “She refused” or “chose not to” repent. The expression “if they do not repent from their works” indicates that it is only when repentance is absolutely refused that punitive action will be taken.

Further, the concept of remnant in this passage contains eschatological associations. The remnant are encouraged to “hold fast till I come” (v. 25). This fact, together with the overcomers who are obedient “unto the end” (v. 26), highlight the concept of the eschatological remnant. Revelation conflates the ideas of judgment (2:23) and the coming of Jesus (2:25) in Rev 22:12. Jesus says: “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.” It may also be noted that the first direct reference to the parousia that appears in the letters to the seven churches is found here (vv. 25-28). We also note that the first mention of λοιπός, as well as the first mention of the Second Coming of the Lord, are found in the letter to Thyatira. This underscores the nexus between the remnant and eschatology.

Finally, we must note that λοιπός is not necessarily a numerical minority.

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91Minear, 55.
92Frederick J. Murphy, Fallen Is Babylon: The Revelation to John (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1998), 137.
93Swete, 43.
94Cf. Kistemaker, 139.
95Thomas, 232, notes that “The substance of the promise to the overcomer in Thyatira, the only overcomer to receive a double promise, alludes to Ps. 2:8-9, a promise to the Messiah of victory over His enemies.”
96Cf. Scott, 80.
97Thomas, 225, notes that “In 1 Thess. 4:13, ὀι λοιποί refers to the pagan world which certainly was not a minority. In Rev 9:20, ὀι λοιποί encompasses two-thirds of the whole earth (cf. also Rev. 19:21).”
The relative pronoun δοσις implies abundance and multitude and, as used here, it includes all those who are designated as “the rest” (remnant). Also, λοιπος itself, as used in the NT, does not necessarily indicate a minority. For example, in 1 Thess 4:13, δ ο λοιπος refers to the pagan world, which certainly is not a minority. In Rev 9:20, δ λοιπος encompasses two-thirds of the whole earth (cf. Rev 19:21).99 Ladd applies v. 24 to a majority of the church.100

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Summary

The first usage of the term “remnant” in 2:24 is proleptic. In its local provenance, it reflects both separation and division within the ἐκκλησία. Because no clues are provided regarding whether λοιπος in 2:24 constitutes the majority or minority in Thyatira, we can make no determinations about the remnant’s quantity.101 This ambiguity may be intentional, directing the emphasis toward the nature of the resistance of the faithful remnant and not on their number.

Points of contact between Thyatira’s Jezebel are verbally and thematically correlated with the universal harlot in 17:1-6 (see table above). These parallels between Jezebel of Thyatira and Queen Babylon in Rev 18 model and anticipate her apostatizing presence later in the book. Further, Jezebel’s local opposition to the λοιπος at Thyatira presages the enemy’s universal war with the eschatological remnant in 12:17 (μετὰ τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς).

The λοιπος of 2:24 reflects resistance to the deceptive teachings of Thyatira’s internal religious enemies. This is consistent with the background of “remnant” theology alluded to in the Elijah-versus-Jezebel subtext imported from the OT. Jezebel then stands as an internal opponent of John and the church. By contrast, the λοιπος of 12:17 is persecuted by external enemies. The remnant of 2:24 and 12:17 “hold” (i.e., embrace) apostolic teaching and authority, while the τὰ βαθέα conform to the deception motif in the Apocalypse.

The salvation of the remnant in Thyatira implies escape from the judgment pronouncement on Jezebel (2:22-23). That judgment is both punitive and heuristic in its intent (i.e., “all the churches will know”).

Since the promise of eschatological salvation is extended to the λοιπος of Thyatira at the eschaton (v. 25), that eschatological promise conflates separated eras under the single parousia promise (2:25; cf. John 14:1-3, delivered in the present tense: “I come again”). This parousia promise, by spanning from John’s era to the eschaton, stands as an example of transtemporality in the Apocalypse. Thus Rev 2:25 connects the historical λοιπος of Thyatira with other parousia-

99 Grimm, Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. “Hosoi.”
98 Thomas, 225.
100 Ladd, Revelation, 53.
101 The λοιπος in Rev 2:24 may not be the necessarily smaller number. Swete, 45, noted that the remnant that has not been deceived by Jezebel of Thyatira is “not necessarily a minority.” On the other hand, Minear, 55, though offering no rationale for the assertion, argued that the λοιπος in 2:24 is “probably a minority.”
expectant people of God across the Apocalypse through receipt of the same promise beyond and outside of Thyatira (Rev 3:3; 16:15; 22:7, 12, 20). Mounce was correct when he wrote “the people of God are one throughout all redemptive history.” This means that the λοιπός of Thyatira symbolizes the remnant, locally and universally, historically and transtemporally.

Conclusions

The first usage of λοιπός in 2:24 sets the thematic framework in the Apocalypse for how the term λοιπός will function in the later sections of the Apocalypse. Nestor Friedrich, commenting on Rev 2:24, pointed out that the λοιπός “underline the aspect of partiality, opposition, and conflict between those who uphold the witness of Jesus and those who follow the beast.” Thus the themes of ecclesial separation; social and spiritual opposition; faithful, determined resistance; local and eschatological judgment; and eschatological salvation are invoked by the first proleptic usage of λοιπός in the letter to Thyatira. The remnant are a faithful fraction of the church. Majority or minority is not the emphasis of Rev 2:24, but the faithfulness of the remnant. They resist Jezebel and her followers through their adherence to the apostolic faith. In the latter half of the Apocalypse, this resistance is globalized and presented by the end of the book as victory!

102 Mounce, 236.