

THE FUNCTION OF ΛΟΙΠΟΣ IN THE LETTER TO THYATIRA

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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

¹For examples, see A. M. Enroth, “The Hearing Formula in the Book of Revelation,” *NTS* 36 (1990): 598–608; Ulrich B. Müller, “Literarische und formgeschichtliche Bestimmung der Apokalypse des Johannes als einem Zeugnis frühchristlicher Apokalyptik,” in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism, Uppsala, August 12-17, 1979*, ed. David Hellholm (Tübingen: Mohr, 1983), 599-619; E. Pax, “Jüdische und christliche Funde im Bereich der Sieben Kirchen der Apokalypse,” *BibLeb* 8 (1967): 264-278; William M. Ramsay, *The Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1895-1897); J. Rife, “The Literary Background of Rev. II–III,” *JBL* 60 (1941): 179-182; G. Rudberg, “Zu den Sendschreiben der Johannes-Apokalypse,” *Eranos* 11 (1911): 170-179; C. H. H. Scobie, “Local References in the Letters to the Seven Churches,” *NTS* 39 (1993): 606-624; William H. Shea, “The Covenantal Form of the Letters to the Seven Churches,” *AUSS* 21 (1983): 71-84.

²See David Aune, “The Form and Function of the Proclamations to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2–3),” *NTS* 36 (1990): 204; Ernst Lohemeyer, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1926), 18, 181-183; J. M. Rife, “The Literary Background of Revelation II–III,” *JBL* 60 (1941): 179-182; G. B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine*, Harper’s New Testament Commentary (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 2-29; George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, ed. Donald Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 36-38; George Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, New Century Bible (London: Oliphants, 1974), 70-72; J. P. M. Sweet, *Revelation*, TPI New Testament Commentary, ed. Howard Clark Kee and Dennis Nineham (Philadelphia: Trinity, 1990), 77-78; Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St. John: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 57-58; John M. Court, *Myth and History in the Book of Revelation*

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.”³ 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.⁴ 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.⁶ 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.⁷ In this appraisal, the pattern of the

(London: SPCK, 1979), 20-28; Greg K. Beale, *John’s Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, JSNTSup 166 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 223. Grant Osborne views chapters 2 and 3 as letters (*Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002], 109). Some scholars stress the prophetic “message” dimension of the seven letters. Cf. Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of John* (London: Macmillan, 1906), 23-25; Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John: Studies in Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), 446-448; Austin Farrer, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine: Commentary on the English Text* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1964), 70-72; and Josephine Massyngbaerde Ford, *Revelation*, AB 38 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 373-375.

³See F. Hahn, “Die Sendschreiben der Johannesapokalypse: Ein Beitrag zur Bestimmung prophetischer Redeformen,” in *Tradition und Glaube*, ed. G. Jeremias et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1971), 357-394; Lars Hartman, “Form and Message: A Preliminary Discussion of ‘Partial Texts’ in Rev 1–3 and 22.6ff.,” in *L’Apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament*, ed. Jan Lambrecht (Gembloux: Ducolot, 1980), 129-149; Ulrich B. Müller, *Prophezie und Predigt im Neuen Testament* (Güthersloh: Mohr, 1975); Robert L. Muse, “Revelation 2–3: A Critical Analysis of Seven Prophetic Messages,” *JETS* 29 (1986): 147-161.

⁴David Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, WBC 52a (Dallas: Word, 1997), 126-130; Ernst Lohmeyer, *Offenbarung des Johannes* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1926), 21.

⁵D. W. Hadorn, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes in Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament mit Text und Paraphrase* 18 (Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagobuchhandlung D. Werner School, 1928), 39-40; see also Lohmeyer, 19-20.

⁶Cf. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 119-125, on structure and proclamations; idem, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 274-279; idem, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 242. Here Aune described them as prophetic proclamations modeled after royal edicts. See also Greg K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 224-225.

⁷Hartman, 142; Martin Karrer, *Die Johannesoffenbarung als Brief: Studien zu ihrem literarischen, historischen und theologischen Ort* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1986), 159-161.

seven letters follows a basic literary schema.⁸

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 panel⁹ of a literary septet and thus forms the apex of the chiasmic structure seen in Rev 2–3.¹⁰ The chiasmic structure of the seven letters may help explain the riddle of why the longest letter is sent to the smallest city.¹¹ 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

⁸See M. Hubert, “L’architecture des lettres aux sept Églises,” *Revue Biblique* 67 (1960): 349-353.

⁹See Nils Wilhelm Lund, who affirms that “The epistle to *Thyatira* is the centre of the series” (*Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in Formgeschichte* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942], 337).

¹⁰See Martin Kiddle, *The Revelation of St. John* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952), 19-20; Dennis E. Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Phillipsburg, 2001), 69; and Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 2002), 76. Beale proposes the following structure (*Revelation*, 226):

- 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 λοιπός (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.

¹¹Colin 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.¹²

Further, the importance of Thyatira and its remnant message is also seen in two constants that relate to the λοιπός of 2:24: the οἶδα (knowledge) of Christ that embraces the faithful remnant, and the encouragement to ὁ νικῶν (the “overcomer”).¹³ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza’s observation that the letters are “proclamations of Christ to the whole Church”¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ In addition to connecting the churches, Greg K. Beale correctly

¹²Gerhard Hasel’s comment on the remnant motif in the OT illustrates the judgment/salvation binomium referenced above: “It [remnant theology] is a part of the *emphasis on judgment and salvation*” (“The Origin and Early History of the Remnant Motif in Ancient Israel” (Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1970), 458 (emphasis supplied). Hasel’s position is endorsed by Jutta Hausmann, *Israel’s Rest: Studien zum Selbstverständnis der nachexilischen Gemeinde* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1987), 112-113. Henry Renckens states: “The connection between salvation and disaster was formulated most clearly in the concept of the remnant” (*The Religion of Israel*, trans. N. B. Smith [New York: Sheed and Ward, 1966], 254).

Beale points to Christ the Judge in 2:23 as central (*Revelation*, 227). I observe that the presence of a faithful λοιπός 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.

¹⁴Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1985), 52. Other scholars who link these letters to OT prophetic letters include Beasley-Murray, 72; Jürgen Roloff, *The Revelation of John: A Continental Commentary*, trans. John E. Alsup (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 42; Gerhard A. Krodel, *Revelation*, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 99; and Ben Witherington III, *Revelation*, New Cambridge Commentary, ed. James Dunn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 90.

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.”¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ Guilds had a patron god.¹⁸ William M. Ramsay’s research of ancient inscriptions found that Thyatira had more trade guilds than any other Asian city.¹⁹ These Thyatiran guilds, however, proved problematic for the faith and practice of the Christian population.²⁰ 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.²¹

Morris, as did Charles H. Talbert,²² 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.”²³ Why? Because the guilds were centers for both

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).

¹⁷William Barclay, *The Revelation of John*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 1:102.

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.

²²Charles H. Talbert, *The Apocalypse: A Reading of the Revelation of John* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1994), 20.

²³Witherington, 104.

business activity and sexual immorality.²⁴ To be among the faithful remnant in Thyatira would have impacted believers' economic lives by challenging their loyalty to Christ (cf. 2:24; 12:17; 14:12).²⁵

Against this subtext of economic challenge in conflict with faithful obedience in Thyatira, the local λοιπός of 2:24 anticipates Rev 13:16-17, where the earth beast launches global economic persecution of the eschatological λοιπός of 12:17. The earth beast utilizes access to material necessities, goods, and services as a tool of religious coercion prior to the eschatological war (cf. Rev 16:13-14). Interestingly, the use of economics as a tool of coercion in Rev 13 is seminally present in local Thyatira. The centrality of λοιπός in 2:24 sets up its readers' framework for the later expansion of the war-against-the-remnant theme in the latter half of the Apocalypse.

*Theological Background: "Jezebel"
as Ancient Protagonist*

The second background critical to a correct assessment of λοιπός in the Thyatiran letter comes from the Elijah cycle of the OT. Revelation's use of "Jezebel" recalls the confrontation between Ahab, Jezebel, and Elijah the prophet. From the Hebrew Scriptures to the LXX to the Greek NT, the story of the remnant in the Elijah cycle is appropriated as a touchstone of remnant theology.²⁶ It contains OT remnant terminology (1 Kgs 19:10, יָרָה; in the LXX, ὑπολείμμα). Commenting on the remnant in 1 Kgs 19:18, H. Wildberger asserts that "The remnant in this case is not merely an otherwise undefined group who assure the physical existence of the nation, but a group of the faithful who represent the core of the future people of God."²⁷ The same is evident in the

²⁴William 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).

²⁵Talbert, 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.

²⁶Elijah'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.

²⁷H. Wildberger, "יָרָה to remain," in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 3:1,288. See also David Latoundji, "Ytr," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem Van Gemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 2:573.

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.”²⁸

However, John uses Jezebel in the OT as a “prototype”²⁹ of Jezebel of Thyatira.³⁰ John used “a code-name”³¹ 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 βαθέα τοῦ σατανῆ might be. Lexically, τὰ βαθέα is a substantive that describes insights beyond the ordinary sensory ken of human beings.³²

George Beasley-Murray thought that τὰ βαθέα pointed to an “emancipation from traditional ethics” with a power to explore “hell, as well as heaven.”³³ One proposal suggests that “deep things” represents a seminal gnosticism.³⁴ Robert H. Mounce and R. H. Charles thought that the background may be with the teachers of magical formulas used to control spirits.³⁵ G. B. Caird saw a policy of conformity to satanic mystery religions that parodied Paul.³⁶ Gerhard A. Krodel thought that the “deep things” may have been Jezebel’s claim to esoteric experience.³⁷

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

²⁸Lehman Strauss, *The Book of Revelation* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux, 1964), 64.

²⁹So Ladd, 51.

³⁰Morris, 70. He notes that “We may assume that the name is symbolic. Certainly no Jew would have borne it in view of the evils practiced by Ahab’s wife. ‘Jezebel’ had become proverbial for wickedness.”

³¹Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *The Book of the Revelation* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1990), 48.

³²See Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: American Book, 1889), 93.

³³Beasley-Murray, 92.

³⁴David Barr saw Gnostics, who could plumb the depths of Satan (*Tales of the End: A Narrative Commentary on the Book of Revelation* [Santa Rosa: Pleridge, 1998], 58). Aune saw in the phrase the possibility of a “gnostic motto” (*Revelation 1–5*, 207).

³⁵See Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 105-106; R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), 1:73.

³⁶Caird, 44-45.

³⁷Gerhard A. Krodel, *Revelation*, Augsburg Commentary on the NT (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 127.

placed on their own teaching.³⁸ Thus the phrase “as they say” in v. 24 would be Christ’s counter-evaluation of their teaching. Further, if the ability to consort with satanic cults or practices, including ritual fornication or eating food offered to idols, was taught as a harmless experience by Jezebel to her novitiates, then other NT literature may help explain the term.³⁹ Jezebel’s teaching may have been underscored by an assumption that intercourse with evil was harmless for her “enlightened” followers. Thus the judgment threat of 2:22-23 appropriated graphically sexual language to describe the seductive Jezebel’s denouement.

Having identified historical and theological backgrounds to the text, we now turn to a thematic interpretation of the passage with special emphasis on the λοιπός of Rev 2:24.

Interpretation of Revelation 2:24

Revelation 2:24 is interpreted under five captions evident in the themes germane to OT remnant teaching: separation, opposition, resistance, judgment, and salvation.⁴⁰

Understanding λοιπός as Separation in Thyatira

Christ introduces himself as ὁ υἱός τοῦ θεοῦ. This is the only time in the Apocalypse that this Christological title is used, though it occurs 46 times in the NT.⁴¹ 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 14:1.⁴² However, Charles thinks that this title was influenced by Ps 2:7-8 since a later reference to this passage occurs.⁴³ The rationale behind the use of this title may be twofold: John F. Walvoord surmised

³⁸Beale, *John’s Use*, 264.

³⁹The 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).

⁴⁰Several 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).

⁴¹Robert 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).

⁴²In cited passages, including Rev 14:1, God appears as the Father of Christ. Cf. Henry Alford, *The Greek New Testament*, 4th ed., 4 vols. (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1872), 4:573; Thomas, 209; Sweet, 98; Charles, 1:68; and Beckwith, 465.

⁴³Charles, 1:68. Cf. also Wilhelm Bousset, *Die Offenbarung Johannis* (Göttingen: Vanderhoek und Ruprecht, 1906), 216; and Eduard Lohse, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1971), 29.

that the severity of Thyatira's situation called for a "reiteration of His deity,"⁴⁴ while Caird sees an apologetic agenda behind the use of the title since Domitian asserted his emperor cults around the empire.⁴⁵ 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 2.⁴⁶ 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.⁴⁷ 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. 24.⁴⁸ He commends them for their willingness to stand apart from the rest of the church.⁴⁹ Walvoord comments correctly on the separation of the remnant from the general church:

⁴⁴John 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).

⁴⁵Caird, 43; Mounce, 102. Aune cites a letter from Augustus that began: Αὐτοκράτωρ Καῖσαρ θεοῦ Ἰουλίου υἱός ("Emperor Caesar, son of the God Julius") (*Revelation 1–5*, 202).

⁴⁶See Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament*, 250; Jan Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation: Visionary Antecedents and Their Development* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 67-68.

⁴⁷John 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.

⁴⁸Morris, 73, sees the λοιπός as "true believers" who have not been led astray by Jezebelean doctrine.

⁴⁹Aune 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 ἄγγελος 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 λοιποῖς, v. 24), but also of Jezebel⁵¹ (v. 20), her followers (v. 22), and her children (v. 23).⁵² 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."⁵³ Such separation is inherent in the affirmation of the remnant.

Thus the first fact associated with the term λοιπός 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.⁵⁴ The remnant, therefore, is within Thyatira and is distinguished from the permissive general church of Thyatira (ἀφέις, in v. 20). The λοιπός is a separate and distinct⁵⁵ class of the faithful in Thyatira.⁵⁶

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).

⁵³Jacques Ellul, *Apocalypse*, trans. George Schreiner (New York: Seabury, 1977), 135.

⁵⁴Paul B. Duff sees "*intra* 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 Kgs 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 πλανῶ (“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.”⁵⁷

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 (πορνεία 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.⁵⁸ Aune also thinks that the meaning here is apostasy.⁵⁹

However, while fornication has been an established OT metaphor for spiritual apostasy,⁶⁰ 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.”⁶¹ 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.⁶²

⁵⁷Beale, *John’s Use*, 314–315.

⁵⁸Caird, 44.

⁵⁹Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 204.

⁶⁰Concepts 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.

⁶¹So Thomas, 191, who speaks of Pergamum and the same charge against the Nicolaitans.

⁶²Cf. Mounce, 104, who says rightly: “Since the eating of ‘things sacrificed to idols’

TABLE 1
JEZEBEL OF THYATIRA AND QUEEN
BABYLON PARALLELS

Parallel	Jezebel	Queen Babylon	Texts
Theological Context	Judgment	Judgment	2:22/18:10
Spiritual Assessment	False Prophetess “deceives”	False Prophetess “deceives”	2:20/18:23
Presentation/ Appearance	Implied attractiveness: “seduces my servants”	Outwardly attired in “purple” and “scarlet”	2:20/17:4
Moral Character	Harlot/Adulterer	Harlot/Adulterer	2:23/17:15
Cultic Practices	Eats defiled food	Drinks human blood	2:20/17:6
OT Name	Jezebel	Babylon	2:20/17:5
Community	“her children,” her “adulterers”	“Mother of Harlots,” her “fornicators”	2:23/17:5 2:22/18:9
Activities toward the people of God	persecutes God’s people	persecutes God’s people	2:20/17:6
Divine Sentence: Destruction	“I will cast her into a bed of suffering.”	“Will be cast into the sea”	2:22/18:21
Measure for Judgment	“according to your deeds”	repaid “according to her deeds”	2:23/18:6

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.”⁶³

Understanding λοιπός as Active
Resistance in Thyatira

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.”

⁶³Beale, *John’s Use*, 311-312.

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.⁶⁴ Schüssler Fiorenza saw in the ὑπομονήν associated with λοιπός the “‘consistent resistance’ or ‘staying power’” of the saints.⁶⁵ 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.”⁶⁶ Beale rightly viewed this resistance in their decision “to continue holding fast their noncompromising stand until he comes.”⁶⁷ The image of Jezebel places remnant resistance in the context of worship.⁶⁸ 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.⁶⁹

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 ἔξω,⁷⁰ which across its more than 700

⁶⁴The remnant are distinguished by their refusal to participate in the sins of the harlot (1 Kgs 18:18; 19:18; cf. 2:24). Seeing the dominance of Baal worship and fearing Jezebel's threat, Elijah lamented: “I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too” (1 Kgs. 19:14). But God responded, “I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him” (1 Kgs 19:18, emphasis supplied). Interestingly, the LXX uses καταλείπω (“to leave behind,” “to reserve”) in speaking of the 7,000 faithful remnant. Their resistance, though unknown to Elijah, was acknowledged and regarded by YHWH.

⁶⁵Schüssler Fiorenza, 191, writes: “Here at this opposition between the worship of God, and that of the beasts, the *hypomonē* that is, the ‘consistent resistance’ or ‘staying power’ of the saints, who keep the word of God and the faith of Jesus come to the fore.”

⁶⁶Simon J. Kistemaker, *Revelation*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 140.

⁶⁷Beale, *Revelation*, 266.

⁶⁸For Morris, 71, “Jezebel” refers to a “kind of problem” similar to the Corinthian problem. He sees Christians under pressure to conform to the pressure of trade-guild banqueting customs, in which eating meat offered to idols was a routine expectation—and included sexual orgies. This might explain the highly sexualized imagery of the condemnation.

⁶⁹Sweet, 94, says: “Christian prophetic women were a problem in Asia in the second century.” Sweet posits a connection with Montanism, “in which prophetesses were numerous and powerful.”

⁷⁰Hermann Hanse, “;Ecw(“ *TDNT* 2:816-829.

usages in the NT displays a remarkable array of meaning.⁷¹ From “to have” to “holding” to “keeping,” this word (here combined with the particle of negation, *οὐκ*) 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.⁷²

This first usage of *λοιπός*, 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 *λοιπός* as Survivors of Judgment

Λοιπός 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.⁷³ 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.”⁷⁴ Similar to the history of Jezebel in the OT narrative, refusal to repent brings retributive justice and judgment.⁷⁵ 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.”⁷⁶

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.⁷⁷

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

⁷¹*Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*, “*Εχω*,” Libronix Digital Library (Ontario, CA: Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1995).

⁷²Talbert, 20.

⁷³Witherington, 104, connects the mistaken tolerance for Jezebel to the fact that the Thyatirans had grown in love.

⁷⁴D. 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.

⁷⁵Morris, 72. The “punishment scene” is dramatic. Most take this to be a bed of sickness or pain. Austin Farrer comments: “The punishment fits the crime—she who profaned the bed of love is pinned to the bed of sickness” (cited in Morris, 72).

⁷⁶Carson, France, Moyter, 1,430 (emphasis original).

⁷⁷Ramsay, *Letters to the Seven Churches*, 245; Morris, 70.

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.⁷⁸ 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.⁷⁹

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 ἦρχω. The NT employs this term in decidedly eschatological terms.⁸⁰ This promise in Revelation is associated with the λοιπός of Thyatira at the eschaton/parousia (v. 25).

The expression ὅσοι in 2:24 clarifies the identity of “the rest (remnant).”⁸¹ But the remnant are characterized by the fact that they do not hold to⁸² or

⁷⁸See Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 93; Friedrich Dürstler, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Revelation of John*, Meyers Commentary on the New Testament, trans. Henry E. Jacobs (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1887), 153; Herman Hoeksema, *Behold He Cometh: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free, 1969), 108; Richard H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1963), 121; E. F. Scott, *The Book of Revelation* (New York: Scribner's, 1940), 89; Uriah Smith, *The Prophecies of Daniel and Revelation* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1944), 346; Walvoord, 76.

⁷⁹This 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.

⁸⁰See 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: ἦρχω (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” (“ἦρχω,” *TDNT* 2:927).

⁸¹Thomas, 225-226, states: “The second person pronoun *hymin* (‘you’) names the addressees of Christ’s word of comfort, a designation that is further defined by the adjective *loipos* (‘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.”

⁸²Thomas, 230, says: “*Krateo* 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 βαθέα indicates that the remnant are the ones who have not known the deep things of Satan.⁸³ Τὰ βαθέα ("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 [*sic*] 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 *on* you 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 οἵτινες 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 than 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.”⁹⁰

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.⁹¹ 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.⁹² This suggests a period of generous duration. Henry Barclay Swete concluded that Jezebel’s heretical activity transpired over an extended period.⁹³ 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.⁹⁴ 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 overcomers⁹⁵ 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.⁹⁶

Finally, we must note that λοιπός is not necessarily a numerical minority.⁹⁷

⁹⁰James Brooks and Carlton L. Winbery, *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1979), 80.

⁹¹Miner, 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, οἱ λοιποὶ refers to the pagan world which certainly was not a minority. In Rev 9:20, οἱ λοιποὶς encompasses two-thirds of the whole earth (cf. also Rev. 19:21).”

The relative pronoun ὅσοι implies abundance and multitude and, as used here, it includes all those who are designated as “the rest” (remnant).⁹⁸ Also, λοιπός itself, as used in the NT, does not necessarily indicate a minority. For example, in 1 Thess 4:13, οἱ λοιποὶ refers to the pagan world, which certainly is not a minority. In Rev 9:20, οἱ λοιποὶ encompasses two-thirds of the whole earth (cf. Rev 19:21).⁹⁹ Ladd applies v. 24 to a majority of the church.¹⁰⁰

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 ἐβκκλησία. Because no clues are provided regarding whether λοιπός 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 λοιπός at Thyatira presages the enemy’s universal war with the eschatological remnant in 12:17 (μετὰ τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς).

The λοιπός 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 λοιπός 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 λοιπός 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 λοιπός of Thyatira with other parousia-

⁹⁸Grimm, *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “Hosos.”

⁹⁹Thomas, 225.

¹⁰⁰Ladd, *Revelation*, 53.

¹⁰¹The λοιποὶς 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 λοιποὶς 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.”¹⁰² 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 Freidrich, 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.”¹⁰³ 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!

¹⁰²Mounce, 236.

¹⁰³Nestor Paulo Friedrich, “Adapt or Resist? A Socio-Political Reading of Revelation 2.18-29,” *JSNT* (2002): 199.