The Epistles

~Just for this Occasion~

The Epistles

- Good place to start (easy?)
- Nature of Epistles: similar in form and mostly in function
- Letters, Epistles, Prison Epistles, General Epistles, Pastoral Epistles

- **Crucial Issue:** All are Occasional documents

Exegesis in the Epistles

Quest: What is the "Big Idea"

- ***Ask Questions:***
  - What is being said?
  - How is it being stated?
  - Why is it here, now, in this paragraph or portion of the argument?
  - How does this 'point' contribute to the overall 'flow' of the discourse or argument?

The Epistles: Historical Context

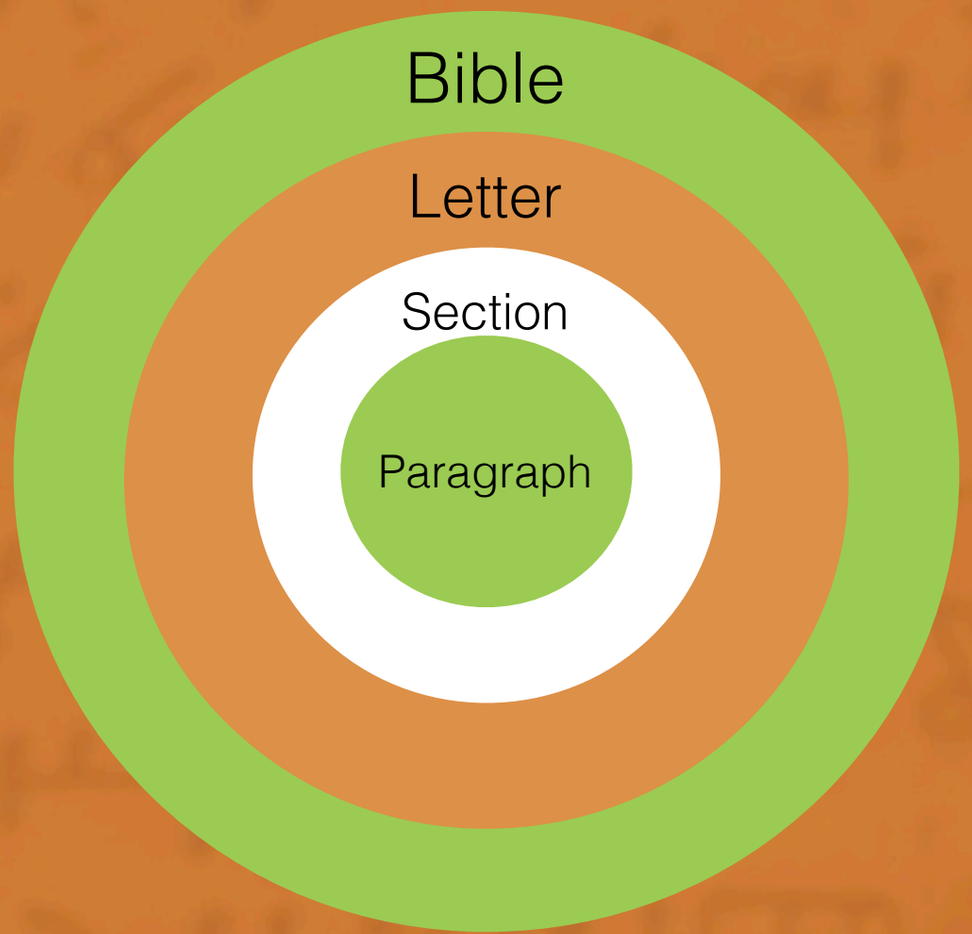
- Consult your Bible Dictionary
- Read the Letter for the Big View
  - Reconstruct the problem (occasion)
  - Note the recipients
  - Note author's attitude
  - Note specific things mentioned to find the occasion
  - Note the letter's natural divisions
- Re-re-Read the Letter and then Re-re-read it again
  - List every clue to the recipient's problem
  - List key phrases that indicate author's answers

Context Clues

- Look for loaded ideas (Examples: Rest, Promise, Call on the Name)
- References to OT passages or situations (Follow Footnotes)
- Names of cities, people or other referents that are clues to meaning
- Any natural or logical divisions of thought
- **Ask 'who is writing to whom?'**
- Develop a working outline

The Epistles:
The Literary Context

- Now is the time to THINK PARAGRAPHS
- Ask repeatedly "What's the point?" As you trace the arguments of Paul response
  - Content: What does Paul say in this paragraph? State this in a concise sentence
  - Context: Why does Paul say this right at this point? Explain this in another sentence
- Case Study: Ephesians 1
- From HTRB: 2 Corinthians 6
  - "yoked with unbelievers"



Exegesis of Difficult Passages

- Be content with our lack of understanding; therefore, be less dogmatic

- Even without certainty of details, we can still know the point of the whole passage ("baptizing for the dead" passage of 1 Cor 15 addresses resurrection issues rather than baptism issues)

- Still ask "What can be said for certain"

- Consult a good, balanced commentary

- Admit when you are only guessing

- Case Study: 2 Thessalonians 2

Exegesis of the Epistles

- Exegesis is *only* 1/2 of the task…Discovering how to hear what was God's Word to <u>them</u>.

- Now we want to go on to ask, What is his Word to <u>us</u>?

- Hermeneutics!

Hermeneutics in the Epistles

- What does this mean to/for us?
- All "do" hermeneutics, even without exegesis as we bring an enlightened common sense to the text
- The Big Issue: ***Cultural Relativity***

Cultural
2 Tim 4:13

Eternal
2 Tim 2:3

Hermeneutical Principles

Rule #1: A passage cannot mean what it never could have meant in its original context and to its original audience. Cases Romans 10 & Philemon & 1 Cor 14

Rule #2; When we share comparable situations as those in Scripture, Gods word to us is the same as Gods word to them.

THE SECOND RULE:

- **Rule # 2**
  - When we share comparable life situations with the 1st century setting, God's word is the same for us too!
    - Our challenges:
      - Extended Application
      - Non Comparable Life Situations
      - Cultural Relativity
      - Task Theology

Hermeneutic rules: challenges

- **Extended Application:** If it meant ____ for them, it must mean _____ for us, right?
  - In extended or extending application Gods word must be limited to teach its original intent.
  - If you are not certain that all the particulars are the same, this is the best approach.

Hermeneutic rules: challenges

- **Non-Comparable Life Situations:**
  - Texts that speak to 1st Century issues that are without modern counterparts
  - Two Considerations
    - 1-Make sure you do good exegesis, because in most cases there are clear principles which transcend the historical particularity
    - 2-Make sure the "principle" is not used widely or randomly

- **Disputable Matters/Opinions:** 1 Corinthians 8-10, Romans 14

Hermeneutic rules: challenges

- **Cultural Relativity:** area with the most present day difficulties & difference
  - Why?
    - Epistles are occasional 1st century writings
    - Some of the situations are highly conditioned by 1st century culture (Jewish sect into Gentile world)
    - Examples: washing feet, head coverings, long hair/ short hair, holy kiss, slaves/masters...

Approaches to Cultural Relativity

- **Case Study: 1 Timothy 2:8-15**
- Three Approaches:

1. **Literalism**: enthroning both
2. **Liberalism**: dismissing both
3. **Cultural Transposition**: discern in Scripture between God's essential revelation (which is changeless) and its cultural expression (which is changeable).

The discernment we need, then, is not between texts (some normative, others disposable), but within each text (the eternal substance and the cultural expression).

Cultural Caution

There is a "...danger both of relegating the revealed truths of Scripture to the realm of changing cultural fashions, and of elevating present cultural enthusiasms into eternal religious truths."

Hermeneutic rules: challenges

- **Task Theology:** The occasional nature of the documents leads to the 'task' nature of the theology.
- In the Epistles we find theological principles presented with a goal in mind. The authors are dealing with specific issues, not providing a comprehensive treatment of a doctrine.

Hermeneutics

- The Analogy of Scripture
- The Progress of Revelation
- The Simplicity and Clarity of Scripture
- The Unity and Diversity of Scripture
- Inspiration and Authority of Scripture

Considerations

- Grammar
- Semantics
- Syntax
- Historical And Cultural Background
- Basic Genre Analysis

Grammar

- Basic laws of language and relationships between terms
- Greek tenses and cases can alter meaning
- Parts of speech have defined function; Verbs modify nouns; Adverbs modify verbs

Semantics

- The Study of "Meaning"
- Meaning Derived from Context not Words themselves
  - "Counter", (of items, in a kitchen, as an argumentative tactic)
  - "Apple" (Fruit, Anatomical, Metaphorical , "of his eye...)

Semantics

Words can have ranges of meaning, ‘semantic range’

Meaning can change over time, and according to culture

Meaning can change based on authorship

Beware of ‘secular’ meaning in sacred text

Common Fallacies

- Lexical Fallacy
  - Assumes word studies solve all issues of meaning
  - 1 Cor 11:2, Eph 5:24
  - "correct meaning is that which contributes least to the total context"
  - Narrowest meaning is usually correct
  - Surrounding terms define meaning

Common Fallacies

- Root Fallacy
  - Assumes primary root meaning transcends all subordinate usages
  - Ekklesia; ‘called out’ ?
  - Parakletos; “advocate”?, “Helper”?
    - Para, beside; kaleo, to call. Call alongside?
    - Range of word meaning has changed…

Common Fallacies

Misuse of Etymology

Study of history of a term

Assumes meaning is found in origin or history of the word

‘nice’ fr. Lat nescius= ignorant!

Heb 2:1 ‘pararymen’ ; ship that slips off mooring and drifts, also boat drifing downstream into harms way > Heb 6:1 ‘anchor’ sheds light on possible interpretations

Common Fallacies

Misuse of Subsequent Meaning

‘martyr’ witness or ‘died for Christ’

Secondary sense is later, 2nd C…

“Analogy of Antecedent Scripture” –Kaiser-

Cannot lay later meaning ‘backwards’ onto text

No 21st C meaning without proper care

Modern metaphors are for illustration only, never definition

Must allow for Semantic Change

Where Does That Leave Us?

- Use care when making strong positional statements about what a text 'means'
- Make sure when preaching and teaching that you have done your homework
- Avoid being dogmatic unless you are quite certain
- Gods Word is still clear in its intentions and application

Meaning Is Genre Dependent

The presence of genre is an important point in the debate as to whether one can recover the author's intended meaning. All writers couch their messages in a certain genre in order to give the reader sufficient rules by which to decode that message

Acts

~The Primitive Church~

Acts: Historical Precedent

- Patterns vs History
- Acts Functions as a Model
- What? before Why?
- The Major breaks and blocks

Acts: Historical Precedent

- Six “Panels”
- Luke's Interest in *Gospel Movement*
- Non “Uniform” even where we wish it was
- The church cannot be stopped!
- The church should grow, move forward, change lives!

Acts: Historical Precedent

- Pattern Value
- Determining a Principle from a Pattern
- Understanding Precedent Setting Ideas
- Binding vs “best practice”

Pattern

Elements of Conversion in the Book of Acts

Text	Teaching	Believing	Confessing	Repenting	Baptizing
Acts 2:38	**YES**	*implied*	*implied*	**YES**	**YES**
Acts 8:12	**YES**	**YES**	*implied*	*implied*	**YES**
Acts 8:13	*implied*	**YES**	*implied*	*implied*	**YES**
Acts 8:37	**YES**	*implied*	**YES**	*implied*	**YES**
Acts 9:5ff	**YES**	*implied*	*implied*	*implied*	**YES**
Acts 10:34ff	**YES**	**YES**	*implied*	**YES**	**YES**
Acts 16:14ff	**YES**	*implied*	*implied*	*implied*	**YES**
Acts 16:25ff	**YES**	**YES**	*implied*	**YES**	**YES**
Acts 17:32ff	**YES**	**YES**	*implied*	*implied*	*implied*
Acts 18:8	**YES**	**YES**	*implied*	*implied*	**YES**
Acts 19:1ff	**YES**	*implied*	*implied*	*implied*	**YES**

Hermeneutic in Acts

Unless Scripture explicitly tells us ***we must*** do something, what is only narrated or described does not function in a normative (i.e. obligatory) way— unless it can be demonstrated on other grounds that the author ***intended*** it to function in this way.

- Frequency of communion
- Day of week for church
- "The Bible teaches communion weekly"
- Issues of Practical Theology must shape our thinking here

Apocalyptic

-Dragon slayers-

Revelation

"...everyone thinks of the book whatever his spirit imparts..."

-Martin Luther

The End Times

Getting Ready for the Apocalypse

4 Mains Views of

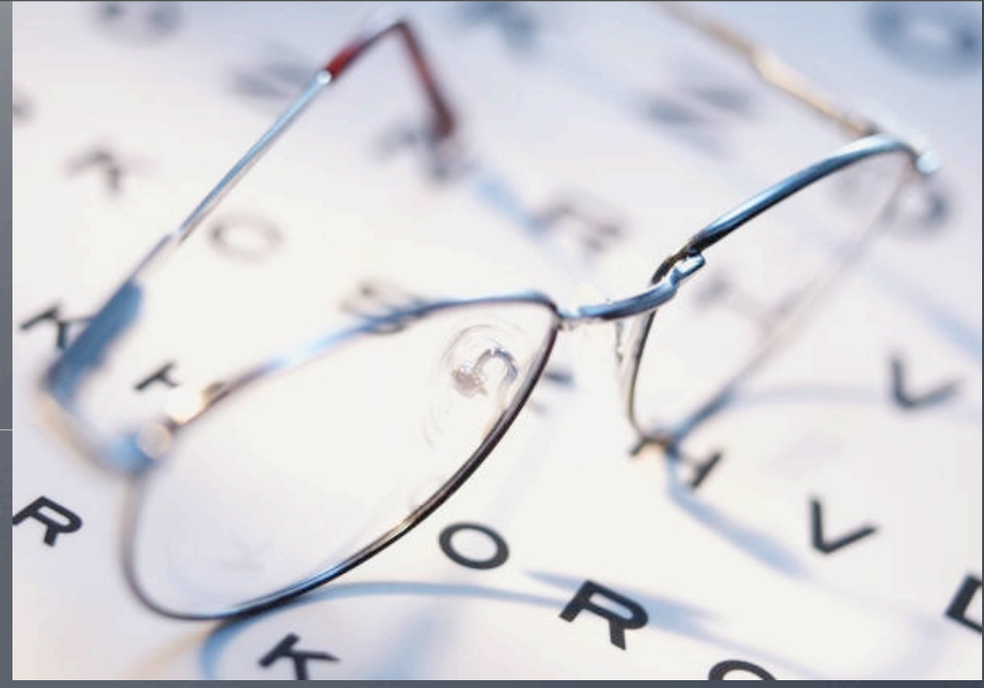
Interpretive School	Basic Approach to Revelation
Preterist	Believe that the events of Revelation were fulfilled beginning in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.
Historicist	View the book of Revelation as an overview of church history, describing various times of persecution and tribulation.
Idealist	Interpret Revelation symbolically, as a non-literal depiction of the battle between God and the satanic forces of evil.
Futurist	View Revelation 4-22 as a prophetic account of actual future events, specifically focused on the end of this age.

Millennium Mess

Dispute about the 2nd Coming of Jesus
and the 1000 year reign (Rev 20)

Post-Millennialist	2nd Coming is post 1000 yr reign
Pre-Millennialist	2nd Coming is pre 1000 yr reign
Millennialist	2nd Coming will arrive gradually
A-Millennialist	1000 yr is not literal

Lenses for Revelation



Purpose

- God is SOVEREIGN and his children may be persecuted but GOD will be victorious, and they will be vindicated!

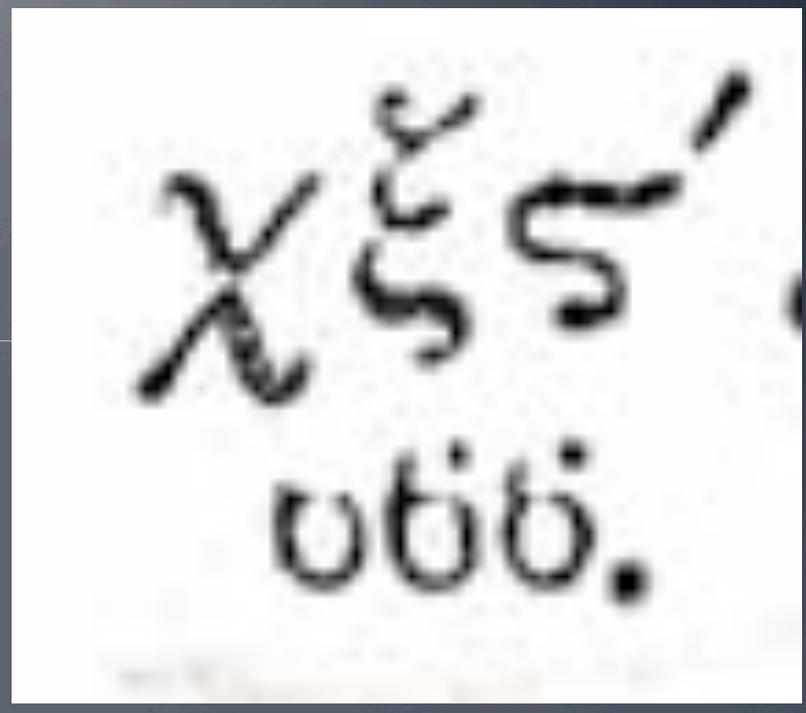
Be Familiar with the OT

- Revelation has more Old Testament references than any other New Testament book. Out of 404 verses, there are 278 Old Testament allusions by one count. (Exodus, Daniel, Zechariah)

Symbols & Numbers

- Painting a picture, not writing a research paper

Numbers in Revelation



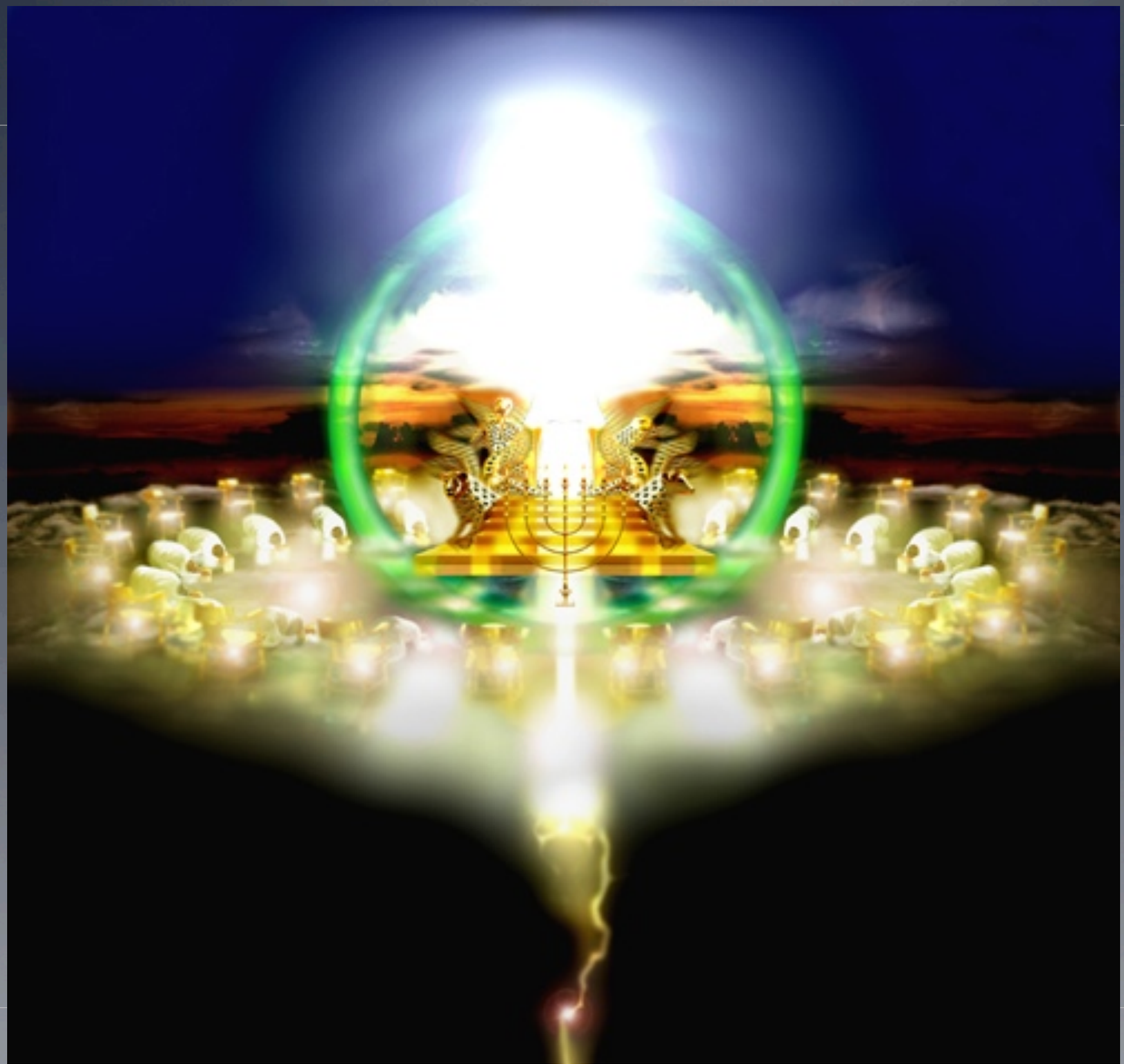
- **2**-Strength, confirmation
- **3**- God
- **3 ½** -Incompleteness
- **4**- Completeness, worldwide
- **5**-human completeness
- **6**- Man, incomplete, imperfect
- **7**- Completeness
- **12**- Unity in diversity -God's People
- **1000**-Fullness and Completeness

Apocalyptic Writings

"Apocalyptic speech is lurid in its colors and very often violent in its tone. It strikes the imagination and grabs hold of the mind. Who, having read of it, can forget the seven-headed sea beast or the scarlet prostitute on its back? Whose mind does not boggle over the falling of the stars and the rolling up of the heavens? Apocalyptic speech is vivid and easily remembered. It appeals to our imagination. It is the language of conflict and victory. It is the language used when God smites the oppressor and vindicates his people. It is the language of crisis if not of persecution."

-Jim McGuiggan (COC)

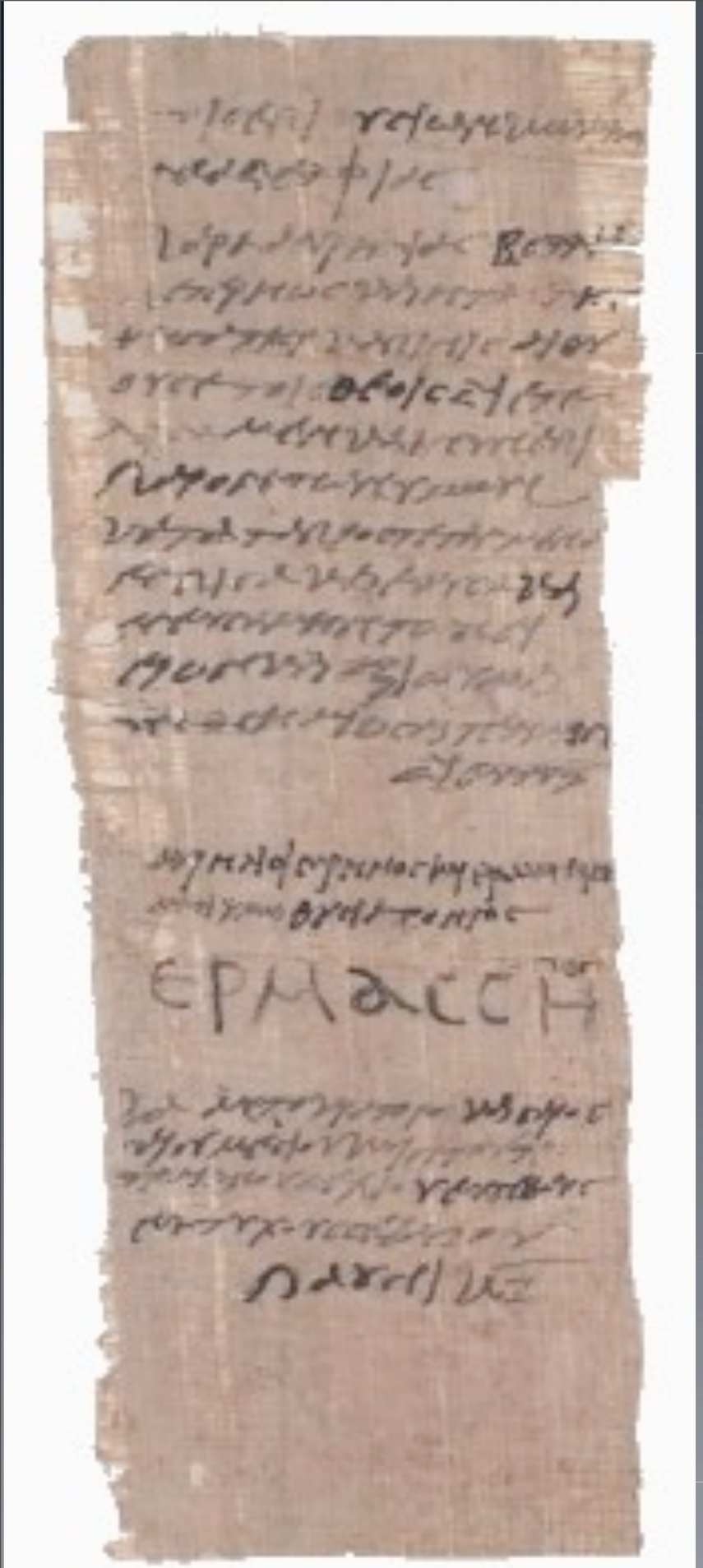
Revelation 4- The Throne



Revelation 6- The 4 Horsemen

Revelation 12
The Woman & The Dragon

Revelation 13
The Beasts



A Libellus of the Decian Persecution (A.D. 250)

Revelation 17
The woman riding the beast

vv. 9-11

5 Who Are Fallen…
-Augustus
-Tiberius
-Caligula
-Claudius
-Nero (the beast)

1 Who Is…
-Vespasian (69-79AD)

Will come for short time
-Titus (79-81AD)

beast who is to come…
-Domitian (81-96AD)

Revelation 19
The end of Rome

Popular but Improbable

Destruction of Jerusalem-

Hades/Paradise
Rich man &

Jesus Returns

Dead Raised

1 Thess 4:7

Living are
Raised

All Appear Before
Judgment Seat
Rev 20:11-15

2 Cor 5:10

Sheep

Mt 25:32-33

Goats

New Heaven & Earth
Rev 21-22

Destruction
Rev 21:11-15

New Heaven New Earth

- Revelation 21:1-5
  - v. 1 “new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away…”
  - v. 5 “I am making everything new.”
- 1 Corinthians 15:35-55
  - v. 49 “…bear the likeness of the man from heaven…”
    - Resurrected Jesus: walk through walls, be touched, eat, etc
  - v. 52 “…the dead will be raised imperishable…”
- Romans 8:18-23
  - vv. 21-22 “…creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom… the whole creation has been groaning…”