

Introduction to the New Testament History and Literature

Lecture 24: Apocalyptic and Accommodation

Transcript

<https://oyc.yale.edu/religious-studies/rlst-152/lecture-24>

Overview

The Apocalypse of John showed an anti-Roman, politically revolutionary perspective. This is in contrast with Paul's writing in Romans 13, which calls for submission to governmental authorities - although passages in 1 Corinthians may be said to contradict this. 2 Thessalonians, a pseudonymous letter, also preaches a politically conservative and accommodative message, as does 1 Peter. Interestingly, these letters do not discard or ignore apocalypticism but use it quite differently from the author of Revelation to further their message of political conservatism. 2 Peter seems to be a letter dating from the second century, from the post-apostolic age. In 2 Peter, the apocalypse is no longer imminent and is not used to further any admonition. Instead, it has become simply a part of Christian doctrine.

1. *The Politics of Early Christianities*

[1] *Professor Dale Martin:* Last time we talked about the Book of Revelation, and I ended up by trying to place Revelation in the context of Roman politics in the imperial cult. Clearly this author, whoever wrote Revelation, and it is somebody named John, although as we said it's not the same John who wrote the Gospels or wrote the letters, it's not John son of Zebedee, it's just some other guy named John. John was a very common name for Jews in the first century, so it's not uncommon that we have a guy named John but don't know exactly who he is in relation to anybody else in early Christianity. One of the things that I ended was by saying, let's imagine his politics. This is clearly an anti-Roman document. That's the one thing we can say about it for sure. Who would write this and why would he write these seven letters to these seven churches that we have in Revelation? One way to think about this is if this document was written toward the last part of the first century, as a lot of scholars think it is, he may—and I said remember his Greek is bad. He doesn't write Greek well, sometimes it's even grammatically wrong in places, and it's just bad Greek—even though we don't have really good Greek in most of the New Testament, but this is the worst.

[2] What do you think of someone who is against eating meat sacrificed to idols, seems to think of himself as a true Jew, and the Jews who are occupying synagogues in different parts of Asia Minor as not true Jews, and is anti-women as far as their roles in the churches? There's nothing we know about this woman he calls Jezebel except that he's using this nickname from the Old Testament for a whore-like idolatress woman, Jezebel, and labeling some Christian woman, who's a leader in one of these churches. He's labeling her with this terrible term. I suggested maybe he's actually writing against the kind of Christianity we see represented by Paul's churches, which were right there in these places such as Ephesus and Smyrna that he's writing too, because Paul's churches actually have people in them who are fairly well off in some cases. They seem to be fairly comfortable with Roman culture. They may have their own businesses, they have their own slaves, there are women leaders in Paul's churches. Paul allows that sort of thing, as some of you have pointed out in your papers on that, and they believe it's okay to eat meat sacrificed to idols, which this author seems to think is idolatrous in itself. I've suggested that maybe this guy is writing Revelation precisely to attack the kind of Christianity we see represented in Paul's own letters.

- [3] What kind of person might this be? One way is just to imagine, and this is pure speculation, pure imagination, what if this guy had come from Palestine himself? Maybe he lived through the Jewish war of 70 C.E., remember it was 70 C.E. when the temple of Jerusalem was destroyed and Jerusalem was overrun by the Romans. Thousands of Jews were taken into slavery and taken to Rome and sold off to be slaves, and the land was devastated to a certain extent. Maybe he lived through that war and that increased his hatred of the Romans. He gets to western Asia Minor, he's travelling around other parts of the eastern Mediterranean, he gets to western Asia Minor, and here he doesn't see followers of Jesus who are, like him, poor, not very well educated perhaps, hateful of the Roman Empire and see themselves as being oppressed by the Roman Empire. He sees Christians who think that they're followers of Jesus also but they're fairly comfortable in their world. They live in comfortable Greek and Greco Roman urban environments. So he writes Revelation to try to shake them up, to get them to hate Rome as much as he hates Rome. To get them to be just as wary of the imperial cult as he is. So that's one picture definitely of early Christianity that we see an anti-Roman kind of politics.
- [4] The live question this week, and the question you'll be talking about in your discussion groups on Thursday and Friday, and some of you will be writing papers about, is what is the politics of early Christianity? In the old Hollywood days, the idea was that early Christianity was a movement of slaves, or all completely poor people, and Rome was always going around persecuting early Christian groups, and there was these little bands of early Christians huddled in dining rooms somewhere, or huddled in the catacombs in Rome, or huddled in caves. Well, that's Hollywood. The Romans actually didn't pay that much attention to the early Christian groups at all until much later than this. There was no coherent persecution attempt by the Romans against the Jesus movement at any time until much later in history. You don't have Rome even taking notice of most of these little house churches founded by Paul and other Christian missionaries for the first several decades. You had actually a variety of ways that these people themselves related to Rome as an empire, and so we see that.
- [5] With Revelation we see this heavily anti-Roman view. But remember what Paul said in Romans 13:
- [6] Let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists authority resist what God has appointed. [God has appointed the Roman governors, according to what Paul is saying here.] Those who resist will incur judgment, for rulers are not a terror to good conduct but too bad.
- [7] Roman governors are a threat only to people who are bad not to good? The writer of Revelation would have disagreed with at completely. He would think this is crazy.
- [8] Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good and you will receive its approval. For it is God's servant for your good, but if you do what is wrong you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain. It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer.
- [9] The Roman governor, from Paul's perspective, at least as he puts in there in Romans 13, is actually God's servant to punish wrongdoing. Completely different view of Roman power than we had in Revelation.
- [10] So where do the different documents of early Christianity—remember we've stressed in the whole course the diversity of early Christianity, its different Christianities in the first century. Where do the different documents line up on their politics? Are they revolutionary or are they accommodating to power? Are they pro-Roman or are they anti-Roman? We've already got now two seemingly opposite positions. Except look over at 1 Corinthians now. Remember, you have to have your Bible's with you, 1 Corinthians 2:6:
- [11] Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age who are doomed to perish. But we speak God's wisdom secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

- [12] Now Paul knows that the Romans crucified Jesus. Crucifixion is not a Jewish punishment, that would be stoning. So when the Jewish leaders wanted to punish somebody with death in Jerusalem they got a mob together and they stoned the person. Stoning was the Jewish means of capital punishment; crucifixion was the Roman means of capital punishment, and Paul knows this. Is he here talking about these authorities who crucified Jesus, that is the Romans? Pilate obviously is the governor of Judea at the time, but Pilate was simply the representative of the Senate and the emperor. Is Paul blaming the Senate and the Emperor for the crucifixion of Jesus here? What does he mean by rulers? You have some scholars who use this text to say, well even in spite of what Paul says in Romans 13, Paul doesn't have any great love in his heart for Rome. He still believes that they are evil powers who crucified Jesus; they're in the process of perishing as we speak, and they will certainly be destroyed by God when Jesus comes back on the clouds with his holy angel army.
- [13] Other scholars say no, the word here for "ruler," archon in the Greek, could refer to superhuman angelic kinds of powers, what we would call supernatural powers. Is Paul talking here about sort of satanic angelic powers that ruled the cosmos? Because remember [we] talked about apocalyptic world view, and one of the aspects of an apocalyptic world view is that different countries have these angelic forces, these angelic leaders that are the true power behind their government, behind their nation. In Daniel we've got the Prince of Persia is understood as this angel who runs Persia. Every nation has these angelic powers or satanic powers, because of course Satan is himself depicted as an angel in the Jewish Bible. So is Satan just one of many kinds of powers like this or rulers of the cosmos, and is Paul actually talking angelic superhuman powers here that crucified Jesus rather than the Romans? Or, as some scholars would say, and I'm in this last camp, maybe he's talking about both. Maybe Paul is including the Romans in these rulers who ignorantly crucified Jesus and so will be destroyed, but maybe Paul also believes that the Romans are themselves controlled by superhuman satanic angelic powers. If that's how you read I Corinthians 2, then Paul's view of Rome isn't quite as positive, just straight forwardly positive, as you would get from Romans 13, right?
- [14] When you ask scholars this question, is early Christianity politically revolutionary against Rome or is it politically accommodating? You're going to get scholars lining up on both sides of this. Some of them say, no, they read early Christianity for the most part as revolutionary and anti-Rome. Others say, no, it was accommodating; they were fairly conservative and comfortable. We assign this topic for your papers this week because this is actually something where there's a live debate that goes on among scholars themselves. There's not one correct answer to this question. It's complicated, and so it's a good thing for you to look at.
- [15] Of course we've already read Luke and Acts, too. In Luke and Acts that author seems to present Rome in kind of a strange ambiguous way. On the one hand, the author goes out of his way to have Roman governor after Roman governor say that Jesus is innocent. Paul is innocent, this movement is innocent, and they're not revolutionary. Paul is eventually taken to Rome, but it's after the governor said, well I could release him, I don't see anything that this guy has done, it's just a dispute among Jews. Yet Paul appeals to the emperor, so he is sent to Rome in the Book of Acts. All these Roman governors declare that Christianity is not politically insurrectionist. It looks like the author is actually writing almost a more apologetic book about the Romans, except in that, and as other people have pointed out, all of these Roman rulers come across looking like they're rather incompetent and powerless. They almost can't seem to control the mobs that are around them. They can't seem to really resist the Jewish leaders who want to accuse Paul of being insurrectionist. So is Rome presented in the Book of Acts, and the Gospel of Luke, as a good force or a bad force, or an ambiguous force?
2. 2 Thessalonians, the Lawless One, and Politics
- [16] Now what we've got is the documents we're going to look at here. First let's look at 2 Thessalonians. We've looked already at some of these documents that seem clearly to be anti-Rome such as the Book of Revelation. 2 Thessalonians is one of these letters of Paul that some scholars believe Paul actually wrote

and other scholars believe he did not write. I tend to be in the camp that said he probably did not write 2 Thessalonians. But unlike Ephesians and Colossians and the Pastoral Epistles, where it's much clearer that they're written in a very different style of Greek than Paul's seven undisputed letters, the Greek of 2 Thessalonians actually looks pretty much like Paul's Greek. So you can't throw 2 Thessalonians out of the authentic Epistles of Paul on the basis of the Greek style like we can I think some of the other letters that claim to be by Paul. Why is it that I say I don't think 2 Thessalonians is by Paul?

[17] Well, for one thing, this is not so important, but we'll get to it a minute, he actually has a message in 2 Thessalonians about the coming of Jesus that seems to contradict what he had been saying in 1 Thessalonians. In 1 Thessalonians he says, it's coming very soon, get ready, don't go to sleep, Jesus is coming back, and the parousia will happen—is all going to happen very soon. He says, now we don't know exactly when it's going to happen but it's going to happen very soon. In 2 Thessalonians, as we'll see, he actually says, no, no, no, no don't quit work or anything, don't quit your day job, because some of the people in Thessalonica, according to this author, seem to have quit their jobs because they're ready for Jesus to come back so soon. He says, no, no you should still be working, there are going to be a few things that will happen first before the end comes, and then he lays out a timeline of what he's expecting to happen, and I'm going to walk you through that timeline in a minute. Some scholars have said what 2 Thessalonians teaches about the end time and the coming back of Jesus differs enough from what Paul had actually said about it in 1 Thessalonians that it might be written by a different person at a different time in a different situation. That's one argument.

[18] I think the more convincing argument, to me, is if you take the beginning of 2 Thessalonians and the end of 2 Thessalonians, and put them side by side with parts of 1 Thessalonians they look very, very much alike. Now wait a minute, they look alike, so that means they're not by Paul? This is what I'm thinking. If Paul is going to sit down and write another letter to 2 Thessalonians is he going to do so with the copy of 1 Thessalonians in front of him? Is he going to do so even recalling the same words

and phrases that he used in the previous letter? I don't think so. In other words, I think 2 Thessalonians, in certain parts of it, look suspiciously too much like 1 Thessalonians to be an authentic letter by Paul. Because when people write another letter they use different words, you don't sit down and basically repeat words and phrases and things from your previous letter. The one place where you don't find those words and phrases being the same is precisely in the second chapter of 2 Thessalonians, that middle part, where this author is teaching a different time line for the end time than 1 Thessalonians had. In my mind I'm thinking okay if you want to write a pseudonymous letter and claim to be Paul, how do you make it convincing? Well if you knew 1 Thessalonians as a letter you might actually take that as a model. Read 1 Thessalonians carefully and imitate the style and imitate even what's said, but then you stick in the second chapter of 2 Thessalonians where you give your own timeline to what you think is going to happen. That's why I think it's probably not by Paul. But scholars kind of divide up on 2 Thessalonians in a lot of different ways, with many scholars, even critical scholars who don't believe Paul wrote all the letters that are in his name in the New Testament, and they'll say they still think Paul did write 2 Thessalonians.

[19] Now what's the goal of writing and let's look at the chapter 2, the first twelve verses of chapter 2. Now read along with me so you'll know I'm not lying to you, because every time I get a chance I like to lie to students and lead them astray.

[20] As to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our being gathered together to him, we beg you brothers [again, it doesn't say sisters in the original Greek] not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by spirit or by word, or by letter as though from us to the effect that the day of the Lord is already here.

[21] He's mentioning there may have been a letter circulated in Paul's name claiming that the resurrection has already happened, the day of the Lord has already come. Notice how if this letter is pseudonymous as I claim, there's a reference to a pseudonymous letter in the pseudonymous letter. That's actually not unusual in the ancient world. Sometimes if you're writing a pseudonymous letter you'll

put a reference saying, well now some people have been circulating pseudonymous letters by me and I condemn them for it. Of course it's in a letter that probably itself is pseudonymous. That's an irony we see in some of these ancient letters.

[22] Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the lawless one is revealed, [Okay, the lawless one, what's he talking about here?] the one destined for destruction. He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship so that he takes his seat in the temple of God declaring himself to be God.

[23] This is something like another sort of antichrist figure that we've seen in the Book of Daniel, Jesus and his own little apocalypse in Mark 13, and other places talk about the abomination of desolation being set up in the temple. This author is saying this person is going to call himself God and set himself up in the temple in Jerusalem.

[24] Do you not remember that I told you these things when I was still with you? And you know what is now restraining him so that he may be revealed when his time comes.

[25] The thing restraining him comes from one Greek word, katecho, and it means something holding back or something holding back something. We can't tell necessarily here whether this is talking about a thing, a power, or a person. Is there a person who's keeping this guy back in the wings, who's not letting this divine self-promoter set himself up in Jerusalem? "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but only until the one who now restrains is removed." This restraining force or restraining thing, or restraining person is at some point going to be removed from the political scene and then this other character is going to come in.

[26] And then the lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord Jesus will destroy with the breath of his mouth, annihilating him by the manifestation of his coming. The coming of the lawless one is apparent in the working of Satan, who uses all power, signs, lying wonders, every kind of wicked deception for those who are perishing because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason, God sends them a powerful delusion,

leading them to believe what is false so that all who have not believed the truth but to pleasure in unrighteousness will be condemned.

[27] What's going on here? Well, to some extent your guess is as good as mine, except that I know a bit more about ancient Jewish apocalyptic, and so I have a few resources to draw on. For one thing, though, I think what's going on here is this author is referring to some kind of antichrist figure. He doesn't use the term here but he's clearly saying this is someone who's setting himself up as divine as God, he's going to take a seat in the temple in Jerusalem, and he's going to proclaim himself to be God, or perhaps he's also referring to a messianic pretender. Maybe he's thinking that this will be another Messiah, a false Messiah of sorts, that is, the antichrist. If that's true then what was he imagining going on? I think what he's doing, and this is my speculation, I think he's actually imagining a Jewish false messiah that's somewhere hidden, he knows not where, there's some guy somewhere in Palestine or someplace else who's hiding in the wings, waiting for the moment when he can come out, declare himself as the messiah, and enter the Jerusalem temple and set himself up as the divine messiah figure.

[28] If so, what's keeping him from doing it now? Well maybe it's just some supernatural force, maybe it's even God, and maybe God has just decided it's not yet time for this to happen. What if the thing that's keeping him from doing it now is precisely the Romans? In other words, the force that's keeping any Jewish messiah figure down now would be the Roman Empire. They're not allowing kings, look what they did with Jesus. They also executed other messiah figures in the first century. The author therefore sees the Roman emperor at work, and the Roman Empire, and that's the thing restraining this false messiah from setting up shop in Jerusalem. But he says, that's going to be taken away. How is that going to happen? Again we don't know. But in my mind, it's the idea that somehow the Roman emperor is going to be moved out of the way by God when the time comes for this all to happen, and then this Jewish messiah will set himself up and then Jesus will come in, destroy the false messiah, and that's when we'll have the setting up of the real Kingdom of God.

- [29] Now, as I said, that's speculation, but what I'm doing is saying, what kind of scenario is he possibly imagining? The reason I do this little scenario is because what would be this guy's view of Rome and the relationship between the Christian movement, the Jesus movement, and Rome? If my little scenario is right, he doesn't see Rome as simply a wholeheartedly negative thing. Rome actually has a purpose in God's plan. Rome's purpose is to keep back this false Jewish messiah from appearing, and then when that purpose is done God will remove the Roman Empire from being a geopolitical force and then the real beginning of the end time schedule will kick into gear, and Jesus will come through, destroy this lawless one, the false messiah, also destroy the Romans, perhaps, and set up the Kingdom of God.
- [30] What that does is that gives us another look at what an author may have conceived Rome to be. It's not nearly as negative as the Revelation author. It may not also be completely positive either because he still sees Rome apparently as being destroyed in the end. 2 Thessalonians, therefore, looks like a case where someone's writing a letter in Paul's name, precisely to counter the idea that Jesus is coming back tomorrow. Because he believes you have to have a certain number of things that are going to happen. It still is fairly soon in the future, he's not expecting a thousand years or anything like that, but he seems to believe that there's going to be a timeline of geopolitical events that take place before Jesus comes back. So that's II Thessalonians. Any questions, comments, or outbursts about that before I move on? Yes sir.
- [31] *Student:* Is it possible that given the cult of the Roman emperor he might be referring to the Roman emperor here?
- [32] *Professor Dale Martin:* That he might be referring to the Roman Emperor here? It could be. In fact that's possibly the way some things have been set up. The reason I don't think it's the Roman Emperor here is because he talks about this character as if he's hidden for the moment, it's a mystery and he's not revealed. The Roman emperor, you could have never said here was not revealed. The Roman emperor was visible everywhere you looked in the Mediterranean at the time: statues, inscriptions, temples so I think he's probably not talking about the Roman emperor as the lawless one because the Roman Emperor wasn't hidden at the time. Any other questions?
- ### 3. 1 Peter and Politics
- [33] Now, though, let's look at 1 Peter. So we're going to another little text that's asking again the same question, what is the politics of the early Christian movement, the early Jesus movement? Most of us scholars don't believe Peter actually wrote 1 Peter. The reasons are, again, numerous, and, notice, this is not an anonymous letter like the letters of John are that don't claim to be written by John. This one actually claims to be written by Peter the Apostle, as does 2 Peter. Why do we think Peter, the actual apostle, didn't write it? Well for one thing Peter was, even as the New Testament several times lets us know, an illiterate fisherman. He probably couldn't read or write. If he could read or write it's almost certain that he couldn't read or write Greek at the level of Greek that this letter is written. There are all those things in the letter that make us think that it looks like a Christianity in a little bit later stage than the very primitive area of Christianity. The development of doctrine, the development of the notions of Peter himself, the idea that certain theology of the letter seem to look later than the most primitive time of early Christianity. Most of us would just, say simply on the basis of the language itself, we don't believe Peter, the actual Apostle, wrote this letter.
- [34] Look what he's writing, he says:
- [35] Peter an Apostle of Jesus Christ to the exiles of the dispersion in Pontius, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.
- [36] Again he's writing too—he calls them exiles of the dispersion, so some people might think, well, he's talking to Jews then, the dispersed Jews. But he's clearly including Gentile Christians in this too, so he's talking about followers of Jesus who live in all this different geographical area, and again, this is sort of what we would now call Turkey, the area of Turkey. Both Asia Minor, which proper was just the western side of Turkey, but pretty much all that area that occupies Turkey now.
- [37] He calls them exiles, though, and I don't think he's talking about this in an actual political

sense. He's spiritualizing the notion that followers of Jesus are exiles in our world. We don't belong here, he says. He says also in 1:17, "If you invoke his father, the one who judges all people impartially according to these, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile." Again, followers of Jesus are exiles—2:11 "Beloved I urge you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul." These are Greek terms that would have meant in the ancient context precisely what illegal alien means in contemporary American context, you're here illegally. All the followers of Jesus, according to this writer, live in the Roman Empire as illegal aliens basically, or not illegal aliens but definitely as aliens. Maybe they're legal aliens but they don't really belong.

[38] I said he's talking not just to Jews, he says in 1:18:

[39] You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors not with perishable things like silver and gold with the precious blood of Christ.

[40] The ancestors referred to here, he's clearly referring to Gentiles who have come into the church as Gentiles and then now occupy their role as part of this alien people too.

[41] Now what's this guy's politics? Look at 2:13: "For the Lord's sake, accept the authority of every human institution." Now we're pretty clear that authority here is not at least just referring to angelic type supernatural authorities, but he's referring to the human rulers, "Whether of the emperor as supreme or of governors, as sent by him to punish those who do wrong, and to praise those who do right." Of course the governors of the different parts of the Roman Empire were appointed either by the Senate or by the emperor himself. This author is not too neat about the actual politics of the first century so he seems to believe that all Roman governors are appointed by the emperor, which was in fact not the case, but some of them were, and many of them were appointed by the Senate. He doesn't care about those kinds of niceties.

[42] For it is God's will that by doing right you should silence the ignorance of the foolish. As servants of God live as free people yet do not

use your freedom as a pretext for evil. Honor everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.

[43] Can you imagine the author of Revelation saying that? It would have broken his jaw to say "honor the emperor." He also doesn't seem to have a whole lot of love for just people in general. The Book of Revelation seems to have a lot of loyalty for the people who are in the group, but there seems to be a lot of despising for pretty much anybody outside the group.

[44] That's the political conservatism of 1 Peter, he's writing a letter to followers of Jesus who live throughout the area of Turkey, and he's trying to get them to see that they don't really belong to Rome, they're not Romans, and he doesn't address them as Romans. They don't really belong to the political situations they're living in. They should see themselves as aliens, as exiles, and yet they should see themselves as properly subservient, honorable, well behaved exiles in a Roman context.

[45] That plays itself out also in some of the other social justice issues in this, in the politics. Look at 2:18 right where we stopped, after he says honor the emperor:

[46] Slaves accept the authority of your masters with all deference. Not only those who are kind and gentle but also those who are harsh. For it is a credit to you if being aware of God you endure pain while suffering unjustly. If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong what credit is that? If you endure when you do right and suffer for it you have God's approval.

[47] This is ideologically very problematic. Telling slaves, just submit, and if you're being beaten don't blame your master for beating you, just endure it. I mean, if you do wrong and your master beats you then you deserve to get beaten, but you should endure it even when you get beaten for things you don't deserve. Talk about "the opiate of the masses"! This is precisely the kind of religion that classical Marxism critiques: a religion that exists to keep the slave the slave, to keep the poor, poor; to keep the downtrodden, downtrodden. Part of the honoring of the emperor is to teach slaves just to submit, and if you can't enjoy it when you're being beaten, at least put up with it.

- [48] Look at 3:1-7, “Wives, in the same way except the authority of your husbands.” My mom used to always hate it when they would read out these passages in church. We’d have a very loud discussion of such passages over Sunday dinner. Then, after this.
- [49] Wives in the same except the authority of your husband’s so that even if some of them do not obey word, they may be won over without a word by their wives conduct.
- [50] Some of these women are followers of Jesus, and their husband’s are not Christians. They should still obey them though he says, he doesn’t allow women to use their Christian allegiance and the Lordship of Christ over them to get out from under the lordship of their husbands.
- [51] Do not adorn yourselves outwardly by braiding your hair, by wearing gold ornaments, or fine clothing. Rather let your adornment be the inner self with the lasting beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in God’s sight.
- [52] My mom especially hated that “gentle and quiet spirit” part; she had no intentions of being a very gentle and quiet spirit. “It was in this way long ago that the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves by accepting the authority of their husbands,” and then it goes on like that. Now look at 5:5:
- [53] In the same way you who are younger must accept the authority of elders and all of you must clothe yourselves with humility and the dealings with one another. For God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.
- [54] In all of this stuff, this author is basically telling people, stay in your place. No revolution, no rebellion, don’t even resent the people who are over you and have authority over you. This is quite clearly political quietism, political accommodation, and one of the reasons he’s doing this, as scholars will point out, is that he seems to believe that Christians can help their reputation if they don’t rock the boat, so you get verses like this, 2:12: “Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles.” Now notice these are converted Gentiles themselves, but he doesn’t call them Gentiles because “the Gentiles” is still a term for those people outside the body of Christ, outside of Christianity.
- [55] Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles so that though they malign you as evil doers they may see your honorable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge.
- [56] And in 3:15:
- [57] In your heart sanctify Christ as Lord, always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in, yet do it with gentleness and reverence.
- [58] He’s basically very conservative in his politics and his ideology. For one reason, he wants these groups of followers of Jesus not to be disrespected by outsiders. He wants them to develop a good reputation so that they can’t be persecuted, so that they can’t be opposed by local authorities. Here we have a clear case of a totally different ideological take on early Christianity, but it’s still apocalyptic.
- [59] This is what’s interesting. This author hasn’t thrown away the Christian apocalyptic that we saw working so much in Revelation to be anti-Roman. He still has it. You can see places. He says in 4:7, “The end of all things is near,” well that’s apocalypticism, and the end is near. “Therefore be serious and discipline yourselves for the sake of your prayers.” In 4:12:
- [60] Beloved do not be surprised by the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you as though something strange were happening to you.
- [61] Any suffering that you have, he says, chalk it up to the suffering that comes with the apocalyptic fire, this is testing you, again just endure it. In 4:17:
- [62] For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God, if it begins with us what will be the end for those who do not obey the Gospel of God?
- [63] He does believe that the people who are persecuting them now, or dissing them now, I’m not so sure that sometimes it was actual physical persecution these communities were enduring, he may just believe that they’re

being disrespected, that they're being discriminated against in some way. But his solution to this is for them not to rock the boat, not to rebel, not to fight back, but actually to just be good boys and girls, be submissive slaves, be submissive women to your husbands, and then, if possible, people will see your submission and it'll make them respect the message of the Gospel. If not, those people will be destroyed, but we have to endure our own punishment and serving now also.

[64] The apocalyptic material there serves a different purpose than it did in Revelation and some other Christian and Jewish text. It's not particularly to explain your suffering, it's just there to be endured, and it's just there because it's part of the message of early Christianity. It doesn't really help fight against injustice in any way, as you might be able to see it do in other texts.

4. 2 Peter: A Letter from the Post-apostolic Age

[65] Now how does this happen in 2 Peter? We'll just look at this briefly because we're almost out of time, but I want to show you one more thing. I believe 2 Peter was written by someone else, not Peter again, for some of the same reasons, but I also believe it was not written by the same person who wrote 1 Peter because it's rather different. In fact, I believe 2 Peter was written sometime in the second century, maybe even decades after the letters of Paul and the Book of Revelation and these others were written.

[66] It seems to me to show a different stage in the development of Christianity. Christianity now looks different in the second century than it did in the first century, and I'll walk you through this and show why I say that and how it works. First look at 2 Peter 3:2. We'll start reading right at the beginning of chapter 3.

[67] This is now beloved the second letter I am writing to you. [He seems to know about the existence of the first letter of Peter.] In them I am trying to arouse your sincere intention by reminding you so that you should remember the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken through your apostles.

[68] This is already something like a post-apostolic letter. He's harkening back to the beginning of

the Christian movement when there were prophets and apostles. Even though he's setting himself up as Peter the Apostle in the letter, the tone of the letter makes it sound like the apostolic era is somewhere in the past for this guy's version of Christianity for his community. We read 2 Peter as actually a really good example of post-apostolic New Testament writing.

[69] He also has references to the Gospels themselves. Look at 1:17, I'll start reading at 1:16:

[70] For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the majestic glory saying, "This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.

[71] What is he referring too? What's the event?

[72] *Student:* The transfiguration.

[73] *Professor Dale Martin:* Exactly, the transfiguration. He's read his Gospels, at least one of them, and he's harkening back to the story of the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain with Moses and Elijah there, and of course who were the apostles, the disciples that were with Jesus at the time? Peter was one of them, there were three of them, so Peter was there, and he's recalling that scene from the Gospels. There's reference to Gospel traditions here, and he's even actually read some written Gospels that we have in our text. He also says something like a reference to 1 Peter, as I already said that, but he says I've already written to you once, that could be a reference to 1 Peter.

[74] Then he talks about Paul's letters, so he knows Paul's letters. 3:15. Start reading at 3:14:

[75] Therefore beloved while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace without spot or blemish and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. So also our brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them,

hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction as they do the other scriptures. You therefore, beloved ...

[76] So he goes on to admonish them. Notice what he's doing, he actually calls Paul's letters scripture. Now Paul, when he was writing his letters, he thought he was writing authoritative letters, but they were authoritative because he was an apostle who had founded the churches. Most of the time he was writing to churches he himself founded, so he felt like he had authority over these churches to write authoritative letters. But Paul didn't think he was writing scripture. When Paul talks about scripture in his letters he's talking about Jewish scripture, the Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible. This guy, though, is far enough removed from Paul's own day that he can actually refer to Paul's letters as themselves part of scripture. That's one of the reasons we think this took awhile to develop. You just don't have in early Christianity, the automatic acceptance of Paul's occasional letters, because they were letters written to real situations, being elevated now to the status of holy writing, scripture. This author is living now in a post-apostolic age and a post-Pauline age, and he obviously—he's probably by this time—they don't have a New Testament yet, but probably by this time he's already familiar with maybe a collection of Paul's letters that are being circulated as scripture among different churches in Asia Minor. He also may, as I said, be familiar with some Gospels that are being circulated as authoritative texts in early Christianity. He's clearly living in a later time, like I said, maybe in the second century, when these things have happened.

[77] Then one last thing that is interesting to talk about, keep your finger there in 2 Peter but we're going to look at Jude, so flip over to Jude which is right before Revelation. Jude is a short little letter, Jude 14, "It was also about these," he's talking about evil angels or angels of some sort, "that Enoch," remember Enoch is that character in the very, very early part of Genesis who was only a few generations from Adam, but there were apocalypses written in Enoch's name and published just in the century or so before this, two or three centuries before this. So we have different documents called the Apocalypse of Enoch or the Revelations of Enoch, or Enoch itself.

[78] Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied saying, "See the Lord is coming with ten thousand of his holy ones to execute judgment on all, and to convict everyone of the deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against.

[79] Notice what he's doing, he's quoting Enochic literature, which isn't in our Bible, as if it is also true prophecy and scripture from Enoch. Now that's what Jude does, it's important because he's having a debate about angels. Now look over at 2 Peter 2:10. I'm not going to read all of this but if you read 2 Peter 2:10-22, you have a bunch of material that 2 Peter is getting out of Jude. In other words, the author of 2 Peter doesn't only know the letters of Paul, he knows Jude also, and he's using Jude as a source, and he copies some of that out. What's interesting enough, he takes out the quotation from Enoch, he doesn't have that. In other words, he takes Jude as a good Christian source but he takes out the stuff he found in Jude that he doesn't consider good Christian material and Christian scripture. He edits out of Jude stuff, that by that time, he believes is not really part of Christian scripture.

[80] Again, what this shows us is that the author of 2 Peter is living in a time when we actually see the beginning of Christian scripture coming about. This is a very different time from the apostolic period when they were just writing letters, occasional letters for different purposes—not having any idea that they were creating a New Testament themselves. This author is not living in the time by which we have a New Testament. That'll take another few centuries to come about, as I talked about the first lecture, when I talked about Canon development. That's going to happen. But he's certainly living in a time that's between the apostolic period, when everything is much more chaotic, and there's not any Christian scripture, and now you do have Christian scripture on its way to becoming its own Canon. This is in a post-apostolic period.

[81] So the last thing is: what does the apocalyptic do here? Look at 2 Peter 3:3, because there is apocalyptic here also.

- [82] First you must understand this, that in the last days scoffers will come scoffing and indulging their own lust and saying, where is the promise of his coming? For ever since our ancestors died all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.
- [83] Notice that's got to be post-Peter, Peter in his own time would never have talked about the beginning of the Jesus movement as happening way, way—with our ancestors. “
- [84] They deliberately ignore this fact that by the Word of God, the heavens existed long ago, and an earth was formed out of water and by means of water, through which the world of that time was deluged with water and perished. By the same word, the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, have been kept until the Day of Judgment and destruction of the godless.
- [85] He believes this end is coming, this end of fire, the destruction of the current world.
- [86] But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promises as some think of slowness, but he is patient with you not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.
- [87] He does have an apocalyptic scenario. What does it do for him? Nothing, it's just something that's part of Christian doctrine that he's passing on. There's no franticness here, there's no idea that it's going to happen right now. In fact he says it could happen in a thousand years. We're no longer with this letter in a kind of Christianity that has apocalyptic fervor to it. We're in a kind of Christianity that is starting to have its own Christian scripture, that's fairly conservative again politically, that you don't see a lot of stuff against Rome, and that sort of thing, and the function of the apocalypticism here is simply it's just something you believe if you're a Christian. Again, it's another example.
- [88] Apocalyptic is a political ideology, but what kind of politics it teaches in the early times of Christianity can vary. Apocalyptic can be something that strengthens you against Roman oppression, that labels Rome for you as a whore, and Jezebel, and a monster, or it can teach you to be quiet and go about your business. One of the things that you're going to be talking about in your sections is, which kinds of text in early Christianity that we've looked at function what way politically? Apocalyptic is one of those political kinds of forces in early Christianity, although certainly not the only one. You're supposed to look at these texts and say, what politics is assumed by these texts? See you next week.

[end of transcript]