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**Assurance of Final Redemption as Motivation for
Perseverance in the Johannine Apocalypse**

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Introduction

In the Apocalypse of John one sees courageous saints standing steadfastly for their faith even to the point of martyrdom in the face of threat. A martyr named Antipas was put to death some time ago in Pergamum. We see souls of steadfast believers under the altar that had died for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (6:9-11). They await God’s vengeance on their persecutors. One frequently hears of calls to remain true to Jesus. Jesus’ followers are to patiently endure and be faithful in face of the threat (13:10). Christians in Smyrna are to ‘be faithful, even to the point of death’ (2:10).

Despite the bleak picture of daunting crises, there are also many *assurances* (or promises) made to Jesus-followers who remain faithful. The book has an extended letter section, in which each letter ends with a promise (sometimes coupled with a warning).

In this study, I look at whether or how assurances of final redemption motivate the implied readers to persevere in the faith. Before one can even look at what the assurances of final redemption in the book are, one has to define what ‘final redemption’ is, based on the New Testament text.

A. The Concept of Redemption

In this section, I attempt to determine the concept of what we call ‘redemption’ in English. Verbs that are used to express this salvific concept include verbs in the domain of buying and ransoming: ἀγοράζω, ἐξαγοράζω and ἀπολύτρωσις. Based on the context of relevant passages, we can gather how the concept of redemption is portrayed.

1. A look at ἀγοράζω or ἐξαγοράζω

The Greek word that is in some cases translated as ‘redeem’ is ἀγοράζω or ἐξαγοράζω, which means in a general sense ‘to buy’ in the market. In the Apocalypse of John, ἀγοράζω occurs in 5:9-11 which describes the Lamb purchasing man from ‘every tribe and language and people and nation’ using his blood, and making them into a kingdom and priests serving God. These will reign on the earth.

The great multitude in 7:9-17 ‘from every nation, tribe, people and language’ emerging in white robes from the great tribulation is likely this group ‘purchased’ through the Lamb’s blood. These had ‘washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb’. The multi-ethnic and multi-national group (7:14) relates to the group in 5:9-11. The other group, the 144 000, are depicted as ‘bought’ (ἀγοράζω) from the earth (14:1-5). The 144 000 comprising of the *tribes* of Israel, are logically included in the larger group from ‘every tribe...and nation’ that comprises Jews and Gentiles.

The slave market constitutes a background to the metaphor of the ‘purchase of men’. Slaves are commodity traded in the Great Babylon (cf. 18:13). In fact, the 144 000, who are sealed by God in the foreheads, are called slaves (δούλους) of God (7:3; cf. 14:4). It was a known practice to tattoo faces of slaves either for punishment or identification. There was also the practice of sacral tattooing in religions of Eastern Mediterranean, in which devotees of a certain goddess may have letters marked on the wrist. Also known is the custom of a slave running away to an Egyptian god and applying the sacred mark, so that he would not be reclaimed.² Calling Jesus’ followers ‘slaves’ of God is common in Revelation.³ The purchase of men out of slavery is used as a metaphor of salvation.

Outside of Revelation, ἀγοράζω is used in a salvific context in 1 Cor 6:20 and refers to the price paid on believers so that they implicitly become slaves of God and no longer ‘freedmen’ to act as one wishes, such as to indulge in sexual immorality. The compound verb ἐξαγοράζω has the figurative nuance of redeeming and releasing someone by paying a price.⁴ It is used metaphorically in Gal 3:13 and 4:5 to refer to the redemption of people from the enslavement of the Jewish law.

² C. P. Jones, ‘Stigma: Tattooing and Branding in Graeco-Roman Antiquity’, *Journal of Roman Studies* (1987): 139-55, see 139-140, 144, 147-148, 150

³ John refers to himself and follow believers as servants/slaves of God (1:1; 2:20; 6:11; 10:7; 11:18; 19:2, 5; 22:3, 6, 9).

⁴ Johannes P. Louw, and Eugene A. Nida (eds.), *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1 (2nd ed.; New York: United Bible Society, 1989), see entry 37.131, 488.

2. A look at ἀπολύτρωσις

Another word that is sometimes translated using the English word ‘redemption’ is ἀπολύτρωσις. Inherent in this meaning is the idea of releasing a slave or a prisoner by payment of a ransom.⁵ In *Rom 3:24*, the blood (life) of Jesus is also used as ‘ransom’, so that one can be released from captivity through the exchange of life, so that one is justified before God. This is the forensic aspect of the metaphor of redemption: to be right in God’s sight. *Eph 1:7* expresses the idea slightly differently. Redemption leads to the forgiveness of sins (similarly, *Colo 1:14*). In *Heb 9:15*, the legal aspect of redemption is again played out. Jesus is the ransom paid to set free those enslaved by sins committed under the old covenant.

There is another focus to the concept of redemption in *Eph 1:3-14*. In this passage, the whole possession of God (including those who *first* believed and those who later believed) will eventually be redeemed (ἀπολύτρωσις). The surety (or deposit) to guarantee God’s completion of this purchase is the Holy Spirit deposited in believers (*1:14*; cf. *4:30*). The focus of the metaphor of redemption here is in line with the focus of the message of the unity between Jews and Gentile believers in Ephesians.⁶ In *1:11-14*, Paul mentions the ‘us’, ‘who were the first to hope in Christ’ and the ‘you’ that was included, presumably, later. This may present a distinction between the former group, the Jews, and the latter group, Gentiles (as in *2:11-22*).⁷

In *Rom 8:23*, the moral aspect of redemption is depicted as an act of ransoming of bodies ‘enslaved’ by vanity and decay (cf. *8:20-21*). The result is a new identity as sons of God through the act of adoption. The moral nuance to ‘vanity and decay’ is reflected in the

⁵ Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 117.

⁶ E.g. *2:11-22* and *4:1-6*. Lincoln writes that Paul is eager to reveal God’s revelation that recognizes the place of Gentiles in the faith community. ‘He considers the law to be abolished, the unity of Jew and Gentile to have been achieved through Christ’s work of reconciliation, and the Church to be a new creation replacing the old order with its divisive categories of Jew and Gentile (*2:11-18*).... He takes seriously the Church’s future in history, emphasizing the need for its unity and the place of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers in producing unity and maturity (*4:1-16*).’ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (Word Biblical Commentary 42; Dallas: Word Books, 1990), lxi.

⁷ See Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 319. More on this below.

preceding context of slaves pleasing (ἀρέσαι) their master—the sinful nature (8:8). These bodies subject to slavery are ransomed and then adopted as sons (8:23). But at the point when one still struggles with one’s sinful nature, the Holy Spirit would provide help (8:26-27) and give life to bodies dead in sin (8:11). The Spirit plays a part in the process toward the redemption of sinful bodies (8:23-27). The role of the Spirit is put in a slightly different way in Eph 1:14. There he is the deposit given to make sure that the process of redemption will be completed.

The verb ἀπολύτρωσις is not used in Revelation.

B. The Concept of ‘Final Redemption’

Based on the above survey of the various aspects of ‘redemption’, we will try now to underline the concept of ‘final redemption’. The adjective ‘final’ depicts a culmination of an uncompleted process. Out of the above passages, only Eph 1:3-14 and Rom 8:23-24 portray an intermediate stage before redemption is completed.

1. The full possession of God redeemed

Eph 1:13-14 speaks of the redemption (κληρονομία) of an inheritance. We now look at this passage again in greater detail. One difficulty is whether the inheritance belongs to the saints or to God. This inheritance has been paid a deposit (the Holy Spirit). The view that it belongs to God is more commonly accepted.⁸ If we take 1:3-14 as a unit, there are indications that God is acquiring men for himself. Foremost, the ‘we’ in the passage were chosen (1:11) and were paid the price of redemption (1:7), then the ‘you’ were included (1:13), and were both given the Holy Spirit as a deposit to guarantee redemption.

The inheritance that is to be *fully* redeemed represents all those who are called to be saved: both Jews and Gentiles. The ‘mystery’ that Paul wants very much to reveal relates specifically to the coming together of Jews and Gentiles under one head, as part of the plan for “all things in heaven and on earth” to be under Christ (1:9-10; 3:6). In 1:12-13, the ‘we’ were the *first* to hope in Christ, implying that the ‘you’ were included after the ‘we’ had been. The distinction between

⁸ For the reasons, see Lincoln, 41-42; Hoehner, 244.

these two groups as Jews and Gentiles becomes clear in 2:11-18. At the end time, the cosmic headship of Christ includes a whole body (church) that comprises the two groups being reconciled with each other (1:22-23; 2:16). But at the point in time of writing, the ‘redemption of those who are God’s possession’ (Jews and Gentiles) is yet to be completed, since the Holy Spirit still acts as a deposit to guarantee the completion of the process in days to come (1:13-14).

In the book of Revelation, we do see a culmination in the great multitude dressed in white from every nation, tribe, people and language’ in worship before the throne (e.g. 7:9-10). They stand victorious, holding palm branches in their hands. These are those who have been redeemed using the blood of Jesus:

And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to... because you were slain, and **with your blood you purchased** (ἡγόρασας) **for God** persons from **every tribe and language and people and nation.** (5:9)

The scene presented here forecasts the end time (cf. 7:16-17). The purchase/redemption is complete and the ‘great multitude’ (i.e. the full/complete body of Christ, using the metaphor in Ephesians, 4:13) comprises of Jews and non-Jews alike, regardless of nationality. The metaphor of God’s people as God’s possession is also played out here in Rev 5:9 as in Eph 1:14. Jesus uses his blood to purchase these people, so that they can belong to God.

2. The final victory over sin

In Paul’s depiction in Rom 8:23-24, ‘redemption’ consists of an intermediate stage where a believer (a creature) experiences the pains of ‘childbirth’ (8:22) and a period when the body is dead to sin, while the spirit is alive because of righteousness (7:10).

Meanwhile the Christian awaits the Spirit to give life to the mortal *body*, through the power of God who has resurrected Christ. Paul is speaking of the body of Christians still enslaved by sin/sinful nature (6:15-23; 7:18-20; 7:24), and of the body that is dead in sin (8:5-8, 10). The so-called ‘raising’ of the ‘body’ does not necessarily refer to the resurrection at the end times. Instead it primarily figures the process in which sin loses its grip on the body dead in sin (8:11). The metaphor of being dead in sin and then ‘raised’ by the Spirit illustrates a change from the state of being controlled by the sinful nature (metaphor of enslavement, cf. 8:15) to being led by the Spirit

of God (a change of master; 8:13-14). One sees the emphasis of the present day reviving work of the Holy Spirit, which ‘gives life to the mortal bodies’ (8:11). The effect of the Spirit on the dead body is apparent in 12:1 a few chapters later: Paul admonishes readers to offer their bodies as ‘living’ sacrifice. We see that the body that was dead in sin is now alive and ready to serve God!

In metaphorical terms, the body that is enslaved is ‘redeemed’ at some unspecified point of time in the future. Paul relates the redemption of the body to another metaphor: the adoption as sons of God (8:23). One can picture the process of redemption (ἀπολύτρωσις) of a slave belonging to the sinful nature. After a ransom/price is paid for his release, he is further emancipated to the position of an adopted son in a new family – he enters ‘into the glorious *freedom* of the child of God’ (8:21). The time frame for the climatic revealing of the sons of God is eschatological (8:18). The freedom that is attained is liberation from bondage to ‘death/decay’ (φθορά; 8:21). The ‘body’ redeemed is one that is mortal, and that which is enslaved by sin and is dead in sin. Thus, the metaphor of redemption and emancipation is applied specially in connection with enslavement by sin. Though the meaning of a bodily resurrection may be included here,⁹ Paul does not use here in 8:20-21 the language of ‘raising’, nor mention Jesus’ example of resurrection as he did earlier in 6:5 and in 8:11—even there, his concern is moral. Paul is concerned in Romans chapters 6-8 with the freeing of a Christian from the clutches of sin, more than the specifics of bodily resurrection at the end time. This main concern is reflected in 6:1-4 in his introductory words to chapters 6-8.

With the above two aspects in mind, I define ‘final redemption’ in reference to the completion of the redeeming process in Eph 1:3-14 and Rom 8:23-24. These are the culmination of (1) the inclusion of Gentiles in the faith community together with the Jews, and (2) the victory of the Christian over sin. There may be other aspects one may like to include in the concept of ‘final redemption’, such as bodily resurrection, but attention will be given to Paul’s main concerns in his use of the metaphor, citing texts that exhibit a progressive development towards a culmination.

⁹ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (Word Biblical Commentary 38; Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 491.

C. ‘Final Redemption’ in Revelation

One normally would not think of the inclusion of the Gentiles as a motif of ‘final redemption’ in Revelation. One immediately thinks of the new heaven and earth and the paradisiacal world as the result of final redemption. But strictly speaking, based on salvific redemption expressed through ἀγοράζω, ἐξαγοράζω and ἀπολύτρωσις, the inclusion of Gentiles, and Christian victory over the sinful nature are two prominent aspects of ‘final redemption’. It may be that final redemption is not limited to these two aspects, but we study these two concepts in Revelation, and see they relate to ‘redemption’ there.

1. The inclusion of Gentiles into the eschatological faith community

Rev 5:9-11 describes the Lamb **purchasing with his blood** man from **‘every tribe and language and people and nation’**, and making them into a kingdom, rulers on earth and priests serving God. In 7:9, the great multitude that emerges from the great tribulation consists of people **‘from every nation, tribe, people and language**, standing before the throne and before the Lamb’. These emerge victorious, bearing symbols of martyrdom¹⁰ and victory¹¹ respectively. In these two passages, there is an emphasis on the multi-ethnic nature of those purchased (redeemed). They include Jews and gentiles.

The other group, the 144 000 that is redeemed, is drawn from the tribes of Israel (7:1-8; 14:3), whereas the great multitude that ‘no one could count’ is multi-national/ethnic/lingual and tribal (7:9). Though one could read these two groups as equivalent (indicating a redefinition of ‘Israel’ as the whole people of God), one should note the intended contrasts in terms of size (finite versus uncountable) and nationality (of Jewish features versus multi-ethnic/national/tribal/lingual) between them. The author of Revelation

¹⁰ They wear white robes as do the souls under the altar; 6:9-11. They emerge out of the great tribulation (7:14).

¹¹ They hold palm branches and praise God for his salvation. ‘Palm fronds symbolize victory throughout the ancient world of the Mediterranean’. In Judaism, they accompany scenes of conquest and festive joy. Palm branches were laid on the road to welcome Jesus into Jerusalem as homage to a victorious leader. The scene in Revelation reminds one of the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles or Booths, which occurs at the completion of the harvest and celebrates God’s protection of Israel in the wilderness and ‘anticipated the consummation of the messianic age’. Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 191-92.

is concerned to depict an equal standing between the two groups before God, and that the former group is a subset of the latter.¹² The implication of this is that Gentiles (non-Jews) are meant to be a part of the redeemed with the Jews. The gospel message proclaimed by an angel flying in the midair concerns the repentance of ‘every nation, tribe, language and people’ (14:6).

The new heaven and earth includes a new Jerusalem (ch. 21). In this we see that though the emphasis is on an inclusive community, he retains some Jewish features of the community. He uses a new ‘Jerusalem’ to stand for the city of God. Ironically, the temple no longer exists in Jerusalem. In its place are God and the Lamb, who is worshipped by all peoples (21:22). Also featured in the city are the twelve tribes of Israel, a reminder of God’s people of the Old Testament, and the twelve apostles in the New Testament. The apostolic age of the New Testament ushered Gentiles into the community of God.

The paradisiacal details in the New Heaven and Earth, such as the tree of life and flowing river (22:1-2), remind one of the Garden of Eden (Gen 4:8-10), which had existed even before the people of Israel came to be. There is a deliberate inclusion of all nations into the community of the redeemed. Both the more ‘144 000’ of Jewish features and the multi-national/ethnic great multitude are specifically described as ‘redeemed’ (14:3; 5:9). In all, we see an emphasis on an inclusive eschatological community of the ‘redeemed’ that encompasses the Jewish as well as the Gentiles. This is a pictorial depiction of a similar theme in Ephesians.

2. The victory of the Christian over sin

In Rom 8, the completion of ‘redemption’ (ἀπολύτρωσις) in Romans takes place in the form of ‘buying over’ bodies enslaved by sin. Paul makes this equivalent to the ‘adoption as sons’ of God. In this process, the adoptee enters into a glorious freedom as sons, since no longer being slaves. This is not merely an end time fulfillment, believers are admonished to offer their bodies (once dead in sin/enslaved by sin) to God as a *living* sacrifice (12:1). If the metaphor of the Spirit giving life to, metaphorically ‘raising’, the

¹² The 12 tribes of Israel fits into the multi-tribal great multitude.

body dead in sin follows through chapter 12, then some kind of spiritual, and not physical, transformation is meant to have taken place.

In Apocalypse of John the ‘redeemed’ (ἀγοράζω) are described in two passages, namely 5:9-11 and 14:1-5. In 7:9-17. Even though the word ἀγοράζω does not occur, redemption is alluded to: those from all tribes/ethnicity/nationality are ‘purchased’ with and ‘washed...in the blood of the Lamb’ (5:9; 7:14), while the 144 000 from the 12 tribes of Israel are specified as ‘purchased’ from the land (14:3).

We see three main characteristics of these great multitude and the 144 000 ‘redeemed’:

1. They persevere despite suffering for the faith (7:14, cf. 7:16-17)
2. They lead a holy life before God (14:4-5)
3. They are victorious before God (5:10; cf. 7:9-10)

Point 2 echoes the theme of not sinning in Rom 6-8. Point 1 is also in view. Paul’s hope in a future redemption of the sinful body motivates him to persevere in suffering (8:18, 35-39). In fact, Christian character is best tested in times of stress. Jesus admonished Christians in Smyrna to buy from him ‘gold *refined* in the fire’ (3:18). A moral connotation exists in the context of this metaphor.

‘The redeemed’ is clothed in white. In Revelation, clothes are used to represent a person’s moral character. For instance, the bride is clothed in ‘fine linen, bright and clean’. Fine linen is a coded for the ‘righteous acts of the saints’ (19:8). In the letters, ‘white clothes’ is contrasted with ‘soiled clothes’ and ‘shameful nakedness’ (3:4 and 3:18). and also contrasted with ‘incomplete deeds’ (3:2). White clothing also stands for obedience and faithfulness even under persecution. The souls under the altar and the great multitude dressed in white have emerged through suffering (6:9-11; 7:14). They have been tested in fire and yet have emerged faithful in deeds. Victory also awaits the 144 000 who have ‘kept themselves pure’ (14:4-5).

The new heaven and earth and the new Jerusalem are inhabited by holy people: the bride of the Lamb is characterized by righteous acts (19:8). The cowardly, unbelieving, vile, murderers, sexually immoral, those practising magic arts, idolaters and liars do not have a

place in it (21:8). The new Jerusalem is exclusively for the upright. The texts specifies:

Nothing impure will even enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life (22:11).

Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood (22:15).

3. Admonishments for Jesus believers to work towards ‘final redemption’ (Rev 2-3)

I observe that the main bulk of the admonishments in the letter section are directed against Christian character/deeds. I gather Jesus’ expectations to each church in Asia Minor and the assured rewards promised to the victors who obey his words in a table.

Church	Jesus’ expectations	Assured rewards to the victors
Ephesus	Church asked to repent and do the things it was doing at first (2:4)	Have the right to eat from the tree of life in the paradise of God (2:7)
Smyrna	Church encouraged not to be afraid of the impending persecution and imprisonment, and be faithful even to the point of death (2:10)	Not be hurt at all by the second death (2:10)
Pergamum	Church is not to subscribe to permissive teachings of eating idol-food and sexual immorality (2:14-15)	Be given the hidden manna and a white stone with a new name written on it (2:17)
Thyatira	Church admonished not be misled to eat idol-food and commit sexual immorality (2:20)	Be given authority over the nations and the morning star (2:26-28)
Sardis	Church admonished to be complete in deeds, to obey the teachings of Christ and repent; metaphorically, believers are not wear soiled clothes and walk with Jesus dressed in white (3:1-4)	Names not be blotted out of the book of life, and be acknowledged before the father and his angels (3:4-5).
Philadelphia	Church commended to have kept Jesus’ words and not denied his name. Believers are	1. Members of the synagogue of Satan will acknowledge that Jesus has loved the ones

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	to persevere in this (3:8).	persevering to do right. Christians who persevere will be spared from the hour of trial coming on the whole earth (3:9-10). 2. At the end time, those who persevere will be made pillars in the temple of God and be in the temple forever, and be written on them the name of God and the name of God's city, the new Jerusalem, and Jesus' new name (3:12)
Laodicea	1. Deeds of believers are unsatisfactory before Jesus; believers described figuratively as lukewarm, wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked; 2. Believers asked to buy gold refined with fire, white clothes and salve for the eyes; 3. Believers need to repent (3:15-18)	Be given the right to sit with Jesus on the throne (3:21)

Table 1. Jesus' expectations and assurances to the victors

From Table 1, on the whole we see that Jesus admonishes believers to achieve perfection in Christian character, in the midst of sinful allurements and opposition (see 2nd column). Jesus is concerned that they:

1. *produce satisfactory deeds before God.* Jesus is concerned for the church of Pergamum and Thyatira about permissive teachings about eating food sacrificed to idols and sexual immorality. His concern is that Christians in Philadelphia and Laodicea are doing unsatisfactorily. He compares them to wearing 'soiled clothes', being naked. He commends their need to repent. He admonishes the Ephesians to do what they had done at first. We can see that the issue in both churches is about deeds that fall short of Jesus' expectations.
2. *remain faithful to God in face of threats.* The remaining two churches, Smyrna and Philadelphia, face some kind of suffering or persecution. Smyrnans were slandered by some

professed ‘Jews’, and imprisoned was to be the result (2:9-10), while Philadelphians could have faced similar troubles from those who claim to be Jews (2:9).

These two points fit into the Pauline conception of one aspect of final redemption: perfection of Christian character in the face of sinful allurements and oppositions.

The theme of ‘final redemption’ in terms of overcoming the sinful nature (as I have defined it) is thus seen to be prevalent in the letters. The other aspect of final redemption concerning a redefined community of Jews and Gentiles is not prominent in the letters, but is prevalent elsewhere in Revelation (see section D, a).

D. Assurance of Final Redemption as Motivation for Perseverance in Apocalypse of John

The main difficulty about working with the topic, ‘Assurance of Final Redemption as Motivation for Perseverance...’, lies in a popular loose concept of ‘final redemption’. One can simply define the new heaven and earth and the new Jerusalem as a state of ‘final redemption’ as they represent a culmination of God’s salvific work. But strictly speaking, words representing salvific redemption (ἀγοράζω, ἐξαγοράζω and ἀπολύτρωσις) are not used in relation to the new heaven and earth in Revelation. Paul does not apply the concept of redemption in direct relation to such a newly created cosmic order, even though he does it indirectly in Ephesians by claiming the multi-ethnic church as his possession (1:12-14)— a new man out of two (2:15)—and applies Jesus’ cosmic ‘fullness’ to the church—his body (1:22-23). Even so, a biblical exegete trying to wrestle with the biblical basis of a theological concept such as this cannot adopt the paradisiacal forecasts and promises as assurances of ‘final redemption’ without qualification. One needs to show that such paradisiacal forecasts include elements of final redemption as identified. As iterated, ‘final redemption’ concerns with:

1. a multi-ethnic/national community of God (see D, a), and
2. holiness/perfection in Christian character, even in the face of difficulties

The issue is that these two aspects are not specified in the *promises/assurances* in Revelation. The second point is prevalent,

instead, as commands, rather than as assurances of its attainment! It would appear that a believer have to make effort to attain the state of final redemption. This is from the perspective of the ‘now’. But Revelation also provides a realized perspective of the final state: holiness is depicted as realized in the holy eschatological community (section D, b). As such, it can be argued that forecasts of this *assured* holy eschatological community also act to spur recipients of the book in the seven churches towards this aim. These forecasts act as the assurance of final redemption.

The book of Revelation was originally written to the believers in Asia Minor. These were addressed in the letter section (see section D, c), and the following vision narrative (chs. 4-22). We see an eschatological community of the ‘redeemed’ in scenes of forecasts in following vision narrative. If this redeemed community prefigures those obedient to Jesus’ commands in the letters (the ‘victors’), then glimpses of victory of the ‘redeemed’ (the 144000 and the great multitude) would encourage the addressed churches to persevere in their faith. I will proceed to show that the ‘victors’ in the letters and the ‘redeemed’ community in the following narrative are in fact one.

1. The ‘victors’ in Rev 2-3 and the ‘redeemed’ community in Rev 4-22

The ideal characteristics that Jesus hopes to inculcate in the churches espoused in the ‘victors’ (section E, a,1-2) concur with the main characteristics of the ‘redeemed’ (5:9-11, 7:9-17 and 14:1-5; section D, b, 1-3): (1) perseverance in the faith, and (2) a holy life before God, even in trying circumstances. In addition, based on Table 2 below, we observe that the ‘redeemed’ share other characteristics that Jesus assures the ‘victors’ with: (1) overcoming opposition (5:9; 7:14 and called ‘victors’), (2) reigning over the nations (5:9 and 2:26-28), and (3) being clothed in white (6:11; 7:9, 13-14 and 3:4-5, 18).

Furthermore, we see in Table 2 that the ‘redeemed’ and the ‘victors’ are promised similar eschatological blessings, such as (1) being part of the first resurrection, (2) reigning with Jesus (5:9; 2:26-28), having on them the name of the Lamb and of God (14:1 and 3:12), and (4) remaining with God and the Lamb (5:9; 7: 9-10, 15; 8:15-17 and 3:4).

Characteristics of the	Promise to the ‘victors’	Eschatological fulfillment
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‘redeemed’		
<p>1. Martyred for the faith (5:9), endured the great tribulation (7:14)</p> <p>3. Made into a kingdom and, reign on earth (5:9).</p> <p>4. Made into priests serving God (5:9; 7:15). Worship and praise God and the Lamb before the throne (7:9-10); sing a new song as the elders and the four living creatures did (14:1, 3; cf. 5:8-10).</p>	<p>2. Not be hurt at all by the second death (2:10)</p> <p>3. Be given authority (3:21) over the nations and the morning star (2:26-28)</p> <p>4. Be made a pillar in the temple of God (3:4). This means the victors are forever with God.</p>	<p>1. Beheaded for the testimony for Jesus, and those who have not worshipped the beast.</p> <p>2. These have a part in the first resurrection (not hurt by the second death; 20:6)</p> <p>3. These reign with Christ a thousand years.</p> <p>4. They are priests of God and Christ (20:4-6). There is no temple in the new Jerusalem; God and the Lamb are the temple (21:22). God will be with his people and will live with them (21:3)</p>
<p>1. Wear white robes, and holding palm branches signifying victory (6:11; 7:9, 13-14);</p> <p>2. not having to hunger, endure thirst, nor be scorched by the sun; led to springs of living waters</p> <p>3. never having to weep again (8:15-17).</p>	<p>1. (not part of the promise to the victors) Christians in Laodicea were instructed to wear white clothes (3:4-5, 18).</p> <p>2. Have the right to eat from the tree of life in the paradise of God (2:7). This alludes to descriptions of Eden (Gen 2:10-14).</p>	<p>1. The bride, the new Jerusalem is dressed in similar clothing, fine linen, bright and clean (19:8)</p> <p>2. There is the river of the water of life and the tree of life by the river (22:1-2)</p> <p>3. God will wipe every tear from his people’s eyes, and there is no more death, mourning, crying or pain (21:4)</p>
<p>Have the name of the Lamb and his Father on foreheads (14:1)</p>	<p>a. Be given the hidden manna and a white stone with a new name written on it (2:17).</p> <p>b. Be written on the</p>	<p>On the gates and foundations were the names of 12 tribes of Israel and 12 apostles of the Lamb (21:14)</p>

	obedient the name of God and the name of God’s city, the new Jerusalem, and Jesus’ new name (3:12)	
	Names not be blotted out of the book of life (3:4)	Those with names on it enter the new Jerusalem (21:27)
	Be given the morning star (2:26-28)	Jesus is the bright morning star (22:16)

Table 2. The redeemed and victors share in eschatological blessings

As such, we can say that the ‘redeemed’ and the ‘victors’ are one and the same category. The author uses contexts of *redeemed* slaves and *victors* emerging from Graeco-Roman games to depict the eschatological community of God. If the ‘redeemed’ and ‘victors’ are in fact denoting the same eschatological community, the same eschatological blessings would apply to them.

2. Assurances to the ‘victors’ and scenes of the ‘redeemed’ as a motivation for perseverance

The redeemed/victors are rewarded with eschatological blessings. These assurances act to motivate believers to remain steadfast in the faith. Christians in the age when Revelation was written were tested in their loyalty to Jesus by the social pressures from a culture of imperial and pagan worship. These practices form an inherent part of the social system. In such a pagan culture, eating idol-food and sexual license are common. These are the two sins John criticizes specifically in chapters 2-3.¹³ Christians face social pressures to succumb to the mainstream religious and moral attitudes of the day. False accusations against Christians from members of the society would easily flare up if there were condoning emperors like Domitian who, in his last year, rather fill up imperial coffers with unscrupulous confiscations than uphold justice in the courts, or an emperor like Nero who takes an anti-Christian stance and sets the mood of the public. These imperial attitudes precipitated social antagonism towards Christians, and a proliferation of false accusations could

¹³ Siang-Nuan Leong, ‘Windows to the Polemics against the So-Called Jews and Jezebel in Revelation: Insights from Historical and Co(n)textual Analysis’ (PhD thesis; University of Edinburgh, 2009), 169-206.

easily have resulted against them (cf. 12:10; 2:9-10).¹⁴ The tone of persecution in Revelation likely reflects this reality. As such, promises and forecasts of a redeemed community of victors in a paradisiacal new world would motivate readers to persevere in the faith:

Many promises are made in the letters (chs. 2-3), such as: (1) being with Jesus (2:7; 2:10; ¹⁵ 2:28; ¹⁶ 3:4-5; 3:12; ¹⁷ 3:21); (2) having new status (new identity, new authority; 2:17; 3:12; 3:21), receiving healing (2:7; the tree of life)¹⁸ and a renewed sustenance from God (2:17; manna).

Assurances are also conveyed through forecasts in the vision narrative (chs. 4-22). I give some examples:

1. In the opening of the fifth seal, the martyrs are promised vengeance for their death (6:10-11).
2. In 7:15-17, those who have undergone martyrdom are promised eschatological blessings. The obedient are blessed (22:7, cf. 22:12-14).
3. Assurances are also conveyed through scenes of forecast: (1) the victory scenes of the redeemed 144 000 (14:1-5); (2) the great multitude praising God before his throne (7:9-17); (3) the destruction of the Great Babylon (17:16-3), which is the source of sinful enticement and hardships to Jesus-followers, and (4) the new heaven and earth and the new Jerusalem (chs. 21-22).

Such assurances can be summed up in a broad category— that of a renewed cosmic order. The Great Babylon, the source of hardship (17:6) and sinful enticement (17:2) to Jesus' followers is destroyed. A new Jerusalem in a new heaven and earth takes its place. In this new world, Jesus' followers are no longer to be persecuted and victimized. Instead they have a new status of authority, and forever enjoy the presence and sustenance of God and the Lamb. *Inherent* in this new

¹⁴ For the false accusations affecting Christians during Domitian time, see Leong, 'Windows to the Polemics', 103-27.

¹⁵ Those who experience the second death, which is the lake of fire (20:14; 21:8), do not have names recorded in the book of life (20:15). Conversely, those who have their names recorded enter the new heaven and earth / new Jerusalem.

¹⁶ To be given the morning star stands for being given Jesus (22:16).

¹⁷ Being forever within the temple, which stands for God and the Lamb (21:22)

¹⁸ The leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of the nations.

order is a new faith community that exhibits the two aspects identified of ‘final redemption’: (1) the redeemed comprising of all nations, tribes, peoples and languages, and (2) a holy people faithful to Jesus even in times of adversity (section D, a, b). These assurances that God’s obedient people are able to arrive at the state of final redemption encourage obedience to Jesus’ commands. *Before a Christian arrives at the perfect state of final redemption, he or she is already given a forecast of what the glorious end would entail.* This is the motivational technique used in Revelation.

It should not be mistaken that John is advocating a work-based religion. John depicts the blood of the Lamb as an integral part of redemption (1:5; 5:9; 7:14; 12:11). The final state of perfection, espoused in a glorious marriage of a holy bride and the Lamb, is equally the Lamb’s work of redemption through a hefty price (his blood), as is the Bride’s obedience to his proposition.

Conclusion

In this study, I see myself given the task to illustrate whether and how ‘assurance of final redemption’ acts as ‘motivation for perseverance’ in the Apocalypse of John. To this aim, I begin by defining ‘final redemption’ in the NT by examining literary contexts surrounding three Greek terms commonly used to convey salvific redemption. The word ‘final’ narrows the scope to those salvific contexts that illustrate a progression towards a culmination. It is observed that two texts in the NT fit the above criteria: Eph 1:3-14 and Rom 8:23-24. Firstly, ‘final redemption’ concerns with a re-definition of the redeemed community to include Gentiles believers (not simply Jewish ones). This is distinctive of NT theology. Secondly, final redemption includes a moral aspect in believers’ combat against sin.

It is illustrated that these two aspects of final redemption are, similarly, motifs characterizing the concept of ‘redemption’ in Revelation surrounding the term ἀγοράζω. While inclusiveness of members is an inherent part of the eschatological community, the call to faithful living and perseverance is Jesus’ main concern; Jesus promises rewards to ‘victors’ who reject the enticement of sin and stay faithful despite adversities (chs. 2-3).

It is noticed that the ‘victors’ and the ‘redeemed’ (5:9-11, 7:9-17 and 14:1-5) are equivalent groups, and the promises/assurances to

them can be read as a whole. The assurances are played out in both the letter section and in the following visions to depict the privileges of membership in a new cosmic order. Though Jesus' promises/assurances in the letters do not literally specify the two identified aspects of final redemption, the new cosmic order entails inherently the characteristics of final redemption. In a sense, Jesus followers are given a foretaste of their destination—the final redemption—even before they arrive.

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