Poems from the Writings of Saint John

Poems Reflecting on Each Chapter

The prose of Saint John's Gospel is simple and profound. His short Epistles are truthful, wise, and friendly. His Revelation is mysterious and sometimes frightening. *Revelation* by Louis A. Brighton, a volume of the Concordia Commentary series (Concordia Publishing House, Saint Louis, 1999), was essential in helping me understand this last book of the Bible.

Most of the fifty-nine poems in this collection were written from August through October 2025. Added to these are poems previously published in other books.

Sometimes works of art based on Bible passages enhance our understanding instantly and dramatically. I have included a few paintings that influenced my interpretation of the events and visions described by Saint John. Pictured above is *The Tower of Babel* by Alexander Mikhalchyk {{PD-US}}, courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. This image was chosen because John's visions of Babylon are so compelling.

Beneath each poem title are Scripture citations that may be useful for Bible study. This collection of poems is freely offered for your meditations.

Kathryn Ann Hill
November 3, 2025
https://www.amazon.com/author/kathryn.ann.hill
Facebook hashtag is #KeepAllHope

POEMS FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT JOHN

Jesus Calls Disciples
John 1:9-13, 35-43

He came into the world—
the world received Him not;
but just a few He called
and lovingly He taught,

that they might carry on,
when He had gone away,
the preaching of the Word
that leads to endless day.

The Guileless Israelite
John 1:47-51

I saw you, Nathanael,
beneath the fig tree,
reading the Scriptures
so diligently.

Follow Me, Nathanael,
for you are to see
the stairway to heaven:
the bridge that is Me.

Jacob's Dream, 1805, William Blake. {{PD-US}}

The Tower Builder
Luke 14:28-30; John 1:50-51

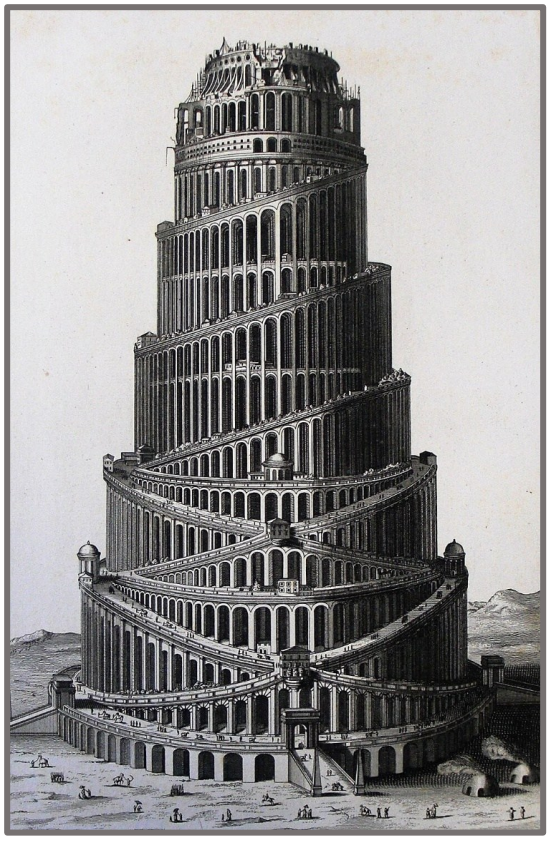
"Let us build ourselves a city,
    let us make ourselves a name,
raise a tower to the heavens
    to ensure our lasting fame."
Men of Babel so aspired,
    but God thwarted all their plans:
When He baffled their one language
    they dispersed to many lands.

Some men dream of building towers,
    scheme and work to make them rise—
Jesus is the only tower
    leading up to Paradise.

Jacob dreamed and saw a stairway
    leading up to heaven's door:
Up and down it went God's angels
    as they wondered more and more
that the God of highest heaven
    should in love to earth descend,
take on flesh and shed His lifeblood
    to redeem poor fallen men.

Some men dream of building towers,
    scheme and work to make them rise—
Jesus is the only tower
    leading up to Paradise.

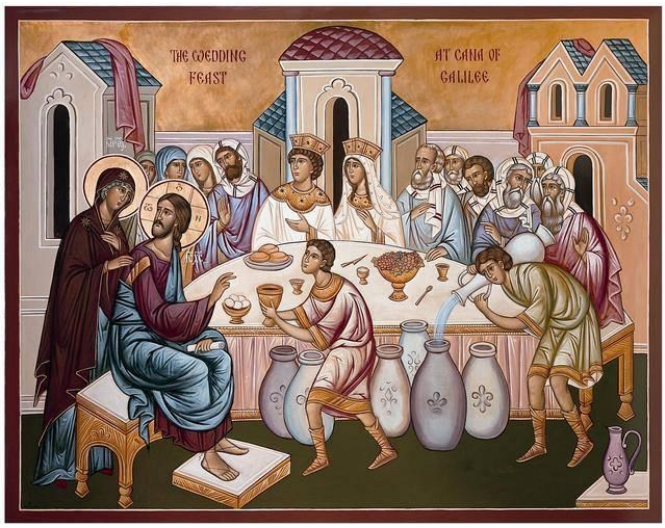
Seed of Jacob, plant our footsteps
    on the stairway You have made:
Make us trust Your incarnation
    so we follow unafraid;
with Your word and Holy Supper
    strengthen us for climbing, that
we may join the host of heaven
    to adore our Ziggurat.



Tower of Babel, the Phillip Medhurst Picture Torah 73, Kirchers.jpg. {{PD-US}}

The Wedding at Cana
John 2:1-11

Water jars to cleanse the hands,
wine to gladden weary hearts—
now the celebration starts
nevermore to end.



Byzantine icon of the Wedding at Cana.

Song for a Wedding Mass
John 2:6-9

The Lord who by His Word created water
and later transformed water into wine
by water and His Word baptized two children,
engrafting two wild shoots into His vine.

Today upon these two He pours more blessing
as in His name their marriage is begun,
as each drinks from the cup of His salvation
forgiving blood that makes His people one.

O God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
so bless this man and woman all their days
that they may live to see their children's children
unite with them to sing their Maker's praise.

For God So Loved the World
John 3:16-18

God loved the world so much,
He sent His only Son
to suffer and to die
that sin might be undone:

No condemnation now
for all who live in trust
that Christ the Risen One
will raise them from the dust.

The Best Man
John 3:29

The Bridegroom gets the Bride—
the best man serves the Groom,
rejoicing at the Voice
that overcomes all gloom:

"My joy is now complete,"
the forerunner confessed,
contented to receive
a servant's final rest.

The Meat I Eat
John 4:34-36

To do My Father's will,
to bring His harvest in—
this work I must fulfill
to pluck His crop from sin.

This is the meat I eat,
the work forever blest,
and when it is complete,
My reapers all will rest.

One
John 5:19-30

The voice of God declares to men
that Jesus is the Father's Son—
the Father's work is Jesus' work:
The Father and the Son are one.

The Father raises up the dead
and likewise death is now undone
for all whom Jesus gifts with life:
The Father and the Son are one.

The Father gives the Son 3to judge
the good or ill each man has done;
the Father's will is Jesus' will:
The Father and the Son are one.

And all who trust the saving work
of Jesus, God's beloved Son,
will stand the trial of Judgment Day:
They will not perish—no, not one.

O Holy Ghost, whose work it is
to give us faith in God the Son,
so keep us steadfast in this faith
that when our days on earth are done,

we join the ranks of heaven's host
who praise the Father and the Son
and You, our ghostly Counselor:
the holy, blessed Three in One.

To Whom Then Shall We Go?
John 6:68-69

You are the Holy One of God—
    to whom then shall we go?
Eternal life flows from Your lips
    to vanquish all our woe.

And when our hearts condemn us, Lord,
    to whom then shall we go
but to the conqueror who crushed
    our cruel, accusing foe?

And when at last our days are done
    we joyfully shall go
into the everlasting bliss
    You lovingly bestow.

My Time Has Not Yet Come
John 7:6-8

"My time has not yet come."
This is what Jesus said
to men whose hearts He read
to learn their unbelief.

But when His time did come,
He suffered, died, and rose
that everyone He chose
might be His precious sheaf.

Truth and Lies Do Battle
John 8:12-30

Truth and lies do battle;
only one can win:
Christ, the Father's Son,
Conqueror of Sin.

What a loving Father,
sending down His Son
to redeem His children,
to make sin undone!

For our sins He suffered,
for our sins He died;
then our risen Bridegroom
carried home His Bride.

Dying to redeem us,
rising from His tomb:
What a loving Savior!
What a glorious Groom!

Glory to the Father,
glory to the Son,
and the Holy Spirit,
ever Three in One.

Signs
John 6:5-11, 47-51; John 9:1-7, 13-25; John 11:11-44

Because He gave us eyes, He gave us signs
to point us to the truth of what He said:
He fed five thousand with five barley loaves
then said to them, "I am the Living Bread.

"I am the Bread of Heaven come to you;
who eats of Me will live forevermore."
And we who eat in faith receive His life
as we partake from His unfailing store.

A man born blind was begging by the way
when near came He who said, "I am the light."
Christ used this man to show the works of God:
Because He gave him eyes, He gave him sight.

Then did this seeing man begin to tell,
in answer to the probing, doubting Jews,

that Jesus was the one who gave him sight—
now he who had been blind proclaimed good news.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life."
Sad Martha heard these words of hope Christ said.
Then Lazarus came forth from his cold tomb:
Behold the resurrection of the dead!

"You are the Christ, You are the Son of God."
This is the true confession Martha gave.
Because He gave us tongues, we too confess
the Christ whose works have freed us from the grave.

Because He gave us tongues, let us proclaim
to other ears the works that God has done,
that Bread and Light and Life are gifts to all
who trust in Jesus Christ, the Father's Son.

Defending Sheep
John 10:14-18, 27-28

Defending sheep, the Shepherd dies
but in three days He will arise:
Up He will leap, for He has sheep to tend.
Then He will seek His scattered sheep
and bring them safely to His keep
and show them lovingkindness without end.

Service
John 12:1-3, 32-33

Martha served the dinner,
Mary poured the nard
on the feet of Jesus—
cost was no regard.

Service by the sisters
pointed to our Lord,
soon to shed His lifeblood
to earn our reward.

Jesus and His Twelve
John 13:1-17, 34-36

He washed their feet, exhorted them,
    and loved them to the end.
He was their Teacher and their Lord
    and everlasting Friend.

How tenderly He pled with them
    to love each other well,
while knowing that His earnest love
    would bring Him close to hell.

Trust and You Will See
John 14:1-4

Do not be troubled; trust in God
    and also trust in Me.
My Father's house has many rooms;
    trust and you will see.

I go there to prepare a place
    for your eternity
among the angels and the saints;
    trust and you will see.

I will return and bring you there;
    trust and you will see
the glory of your Holy God,
    the blessed One in Three.

Abide in Me
John 15:5-8

If you abide in Me
and I abide in you,
then you will bear much fruit,
doing what I would do.

Continue in My word
that shows you how to live:
to love and help and serve,
to comfort and forgive.

The Comforter
John 16:5-16, 31-33

You sorrow when I tell you I will leave,
but I will send the Comforter to you,
who will console you with My promises,
convincing you that every word is true.

And when your time of tribulation comes
to harrow you and purify your soul,
the Spirit will be ever by your side,
to see you resurrected pure and whole.

Little Whiles
John 16:19-22

"In a little while you will not see Me,
but when some little whiles have passed away,
you will be surrounded by My glory,
My light providing you with endless day."
All praise to Him who first created light,
then died to make us holy in His sight.

That We Should All Be One
John 17:20-23

How fervently Christ pleads
that we should all be one,
the Father and the Son
and all for whom He came.

Lord, so conform our deeds
and hearts and minds to You
that all we say and do
brings glory to Your name.

Peter
John 18:15-18, 25-26; Matthew 16:15-18; John 20:19-23; John 21:15-19

"You are not one of His disciples, are you?"
"I am not," came the fisherman's reply.

He was a pebble moved by waves of fear then,
    but Simon will be Peter by and by.

A slave girl's question made the big man stumble;
    then twice again he told his coward's lie
while waiting in the high priest's chilly courtyard—
    but Simon will be Peter by and by.

For Christ told Simon, "You shall be called Peter;"
    and Peter is the name for solid rock;
and after Jesus breathed His Peace on Simon,
    the Spirit moved his tongue in faithful talk.

So Peter preached the Gospel as Christ bade him
    and followed in the way that Jesus walked
and then stretched out his hands, like Christ before him,
    conforming to the one true Solid Rock.

Crucify Him!
John 19:4-16

Though Pilate found no basis for a charge,
the bloodlust of the crowd did not relent;
and so at last he took the judgment seat
to let the angry mob have his assent.

A higher justice was at work that day
when Innocence would pay sin's fatal price,
for up to God the Father from the cross
would waft the sweetest-smelling sacrifice.

To Golgotha
John 19:17

The women wail, the soldiers goad,
Christ stumbles from the crushing load
of sin and pain and woe He must annul;
then once again He rises up
to carry on to drain His cup
of suffering and crush the devil's skull.

Christ bearing His cross, *Die Bibel in Bildern*, 1860, Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld.

The Royal Bridegroom
John 19:38-42

Now Joseph makes a place for Christ to rest
and Nicodemus brings the very best
of myrrh and aloes, fit to wrap a King;
for Christ, the royal Bridegroom will arise
to claim His Holy Bride, His hard-won prize,
of whose great marriage feast the angels sing.

The Apostolic Faith
John 20:24-29

When Thomas touched the source of faith
    his doubts were thrust aside:
The Christ who gave His life for him
    had pierced his doubting pride.

Now we who have not seen believe,
    because he testified
that Jesus was his Lord and God,
    alive though He had died.

And tongues and hands deliver faith,
    it cannot be denied,
when pastors speak God's triune name
    and water is applied.

And lips partake from human hands
    and faith is fortified
when pastors serve the precious blood
    that flowed from Jesus' side.

Lord, give Your Church Your peace, we pray,
    when truth and doubt collide
through faith that grows from all the gifts
    of Christ the Crucified.

Discipleship
John 21:1-6

When they decided they would all go fishing,
they fished all night and did not catch a thing.
Then Jesus came and gave His good direction
and they caught almost more than they could bring.

There is a lesson here for all disciples
who want to fish for men to fill their naves:
Do not embark on such a bold adventure
without commands from Christ, who rules the waves.

POEMS FROM THE EPISTLES OF SAINT JOHN

Absolution
1 John 1:8-10

When we deny our sin, we tell a lie;
God's faithful truth and justice we defy.
But when we make confession of our sins,
the absolution of our Lord begins
to purify our hearts and change ways,
so that we serve our neighbor with due praise
to Him who makes us faithful, just, and true
to do the work that He would have us do.

Paterfamilias scribit
1 John 2:12-14

The Father and the Son and Holy Ghost
all knew each other from eternity:
As one they comprehended one good will
to rescue man from Satan's tyranny.

The Father sent His Son to save mankind:
Incarnate by the Holy Ghost was He
and born into the world from Mary's womb
to overcome the devil's enmity.

The Son, the Word made flesh, our Savior Christ,
crushed Satan's damning power when He died,
and we receive forgiveness for our sins
because God let Himself be crucified.

I write you, little children, for your sins
are all forgiven in the name of Christ;
I write you for you know the Father's love
because His perfect Son was sacrificed.

I write you, fathers, for you all have known
the one who is the genesis of all,
who gave you life and gave you life again
through faith in your Redeemer from the Fall.

I write to you, young men, for you are strong
because the word of God abides in you;
your Brother who has bruised the serpent's head
gives you His sword unbreakable and true.

Dear children, keep receiving God's good gifts,
dear fathers, keep the children in your care,
young men, defend the children in their need,
rejoicing always in the faith you share.

Learn of Me
1 John 3:16

Laying down your life
like your dearest Friend—
this is what is meant
by loving to the end.

Will you give your life
to let another live?
Only if you learn
from Jesus how to give.

We Love Because He First Loved Us
1 John 4:19; Luke 7:36-50

A penitent washed Jesus' feet
with grateful tears, and heard Him say,
"Your faith has saved you; go in peace."
So lovingly she went her way.

We love because He first loved us,
and so we find, where love is great,
forgiveness first has been received
by ones who learn to imitate.

O Lord, whose precious gift of faith
yields love beyond what we deserve,
enable us to share that love:
to give and help and care and serve.

The Water and the Blood
1 John 5:6

The water and the blood,
the cleansing and the flood
of sin-expelling red,
the rising from the dead,
eternal life ahead—
What wonders You have done,
O Father, through Your Son!

To Meet You Face to Face
2 John 12

Dear lady of the church,
dear daughter saved by grace,
it makes my joy complete
to meet you face to face
and share the fellowship
of Christ our Lord with you,
exulting that we know
His every word is true.

Lord Jesus, Keep Us True
3 John 1-10

Good and faithful Gaius
showed hospitality:
He witnessed to the truth
with perfect honesty.

Diotrephes did not,
and spurned the ones who did:
He was an antichrist,
defying what God bid.

Lord Jesus, keep us true,
that we may honor You.

POEMS FROM REVELATION

Grace and Peace to You
Revelation 1:4

From Him who is and was and is to come,
from Jesus Christ, the firstborn from the dead,
and from the Holy Spirit, by whose grace
your faith began and constantly is fed,
come grace and peace to you who are redeemed,
who have, by Jesus' blood, been freed from sin
and entered into everlasting life
with all the host of heaven as your kin.

Consolation 2024
Revelation 2:10

"Be thou faithful unto death,"
then receive the crown of life:
Breathe the Holy Spirit's breath,
undeterred by sin and strife—
come, Lord Jesus, come, we pray,
wipe our every tear away.

Lukewarm
Revelation 3:16

Those complacent, lukewarm ones
    were neither hot nor cold;
their indifference to the Christ
    was grievous to behold.

Jesus called them to repent,
    to do just as He bid,
to come and buy His good things—
    I hope to God they did.

Lord Jesus, keep us humble, keep us true
that we may spend eternity with You.

The Throne Room of Heaven
Revelation 4:1-11

Mystic and majestic
with flashing colored light
and rumbles of thunder
and elders clad in white:

Twenty-four in number
fall down before the throne
of Him who is to come
and claim us as His own.

Tetramorph
Revelation 4:4-6

Four living creatures beyond heaven's door:
Ox, eagle, man, lion, ever adore
the Lord on His throne, the Maker of all,
who died to redeem us after the Fall.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Evangelists four,
show how Christ opened the heavenly door,
recording the grave and wondrous story
of sinners redeemed to endless glory.

Thirteenth-century ivory carving of Christ in Majesty surrounded by the creatures of the tetramorph, in the Musée de Cluny, Paris. {{PD-US}}

Lion and Lamb
Revelation 5:5-6

Lion and Lamb, the Great I AM
at will was fierce or meek:
He roared against our enemies
but gently called the meek.

O Lion Man, O slaughtered Lamb
whose blood has drowned our sins,
we bless Your name, for by Your name
our endless life begins.

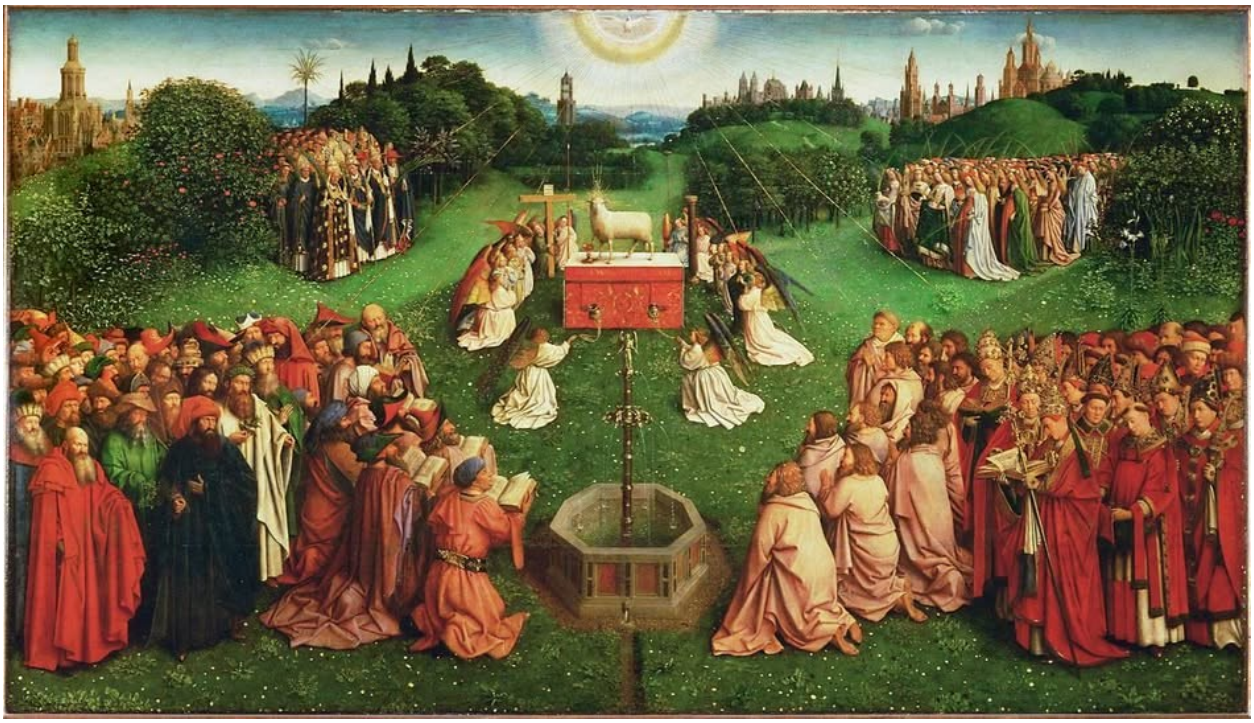
Under Heaven's Altar
Revelation 6:9-11

Under the incense altar,
the souls of every saint
who had died a martyr's death
now uttered their complaint.

They cried to God for justice,
for vengeance on their foes.
He told them to be patient
and gave them pure white clothes

that signify salvation,
the gift Christ's blood has bought.
What grace to wretched sinners!
What love beyond all thought!

Douce Apocalypse, Bodleian Ms180, 13th century. {{PD-US}}



The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb, Ghent Altarpiece, 1432, Jan van Eyck. {{PD-US}}

White in the Blood
Revelation 7:14

What brought about this dyeing
where blood makes robes turn white?
The dying of the Lamb
who makes us holy in God's sight.

Let praise from saints and angels
the heavens ever flood
For Jesus and His bleaching bath
of water mixed with blood.

Out of the Great Tribulation
Revelation 7:14-17

Out of the great tribulation
the saints of God have passed
to find their tears all wiped away
by nail-scarred hands at last.

The Lamb of God has brought them
where living waters spring,
and now with tongues refreshed they join
the hymns the angels sing.

They stand before the throne of God
and serve Him day and night,
the former poor in spirit
now clothed in spotless white.

His temple gives them shelter
no scorching heat can pierce;
His table keeps them ever
from thirst and hunger fierce.

O come, Lord Jesus, to this world
of suffering and strife
and bring Your children home with You
to everlasting life.

The Seventh Seal
Revelation 8:1

In faith and fear and silent awe,
Christians stand before the Lord,
witnessing His judgments,
waiting for a word
that will explain
what they saw,
trusting
Him.

Depravity
Revelation 9:20-21

Even torture did not teach
    the wicked to repent:
Having turned their backs on God,
    they never would relent
from murder, robbery, witchcraft,
    and immorality,
unashamed to lust then boast
    of their depravity.

O wretched sinners, punished for your wrong,
if only you had heard salvation's song.

The Little Scroll
Revelation 10:9-11

John ate the little scroll
that he was told to eat;
at first it tasted sweet,
like honey on his tongue,
but then it took its toll
with pangs of bitterness:
His stomach felt distress
as he digested it.

The Gospel was the sweet
forgiveness from the Christ
who freely sacrificed
His life, then quit His tomb:
Salvation was complete,
but still the evil foe
would bring John grief and woe
and bitter loneliness.

Lightning and Thunder
Revelation 11:16, 19

Lightning and thunder and earthquake and hail
are signs that the Lord will ever prevail:
By these will the devil's minions be crushed,
and the works of their hands will turn to dust.

Lightning and thunder and earthquake and hail
declare that God's power never will fail:
Facedown fall the faithful in reverent fear
at the wonders they see and feel and hear.

Who Is Like God?
Revelation 12:7

He said, "The Lord rebuke you,"
when Satan tried to claim
the body left by Moses—
his weapon was God's name.

He faced the Prince of Persia
and matched him blow for blow
beside his battling brother
to spare God's people woe.

When war arose in heaven,
the rebels could not win;
he threw down the deceiver
who lured us into sin.

Who is like God but Michael,
the angel of the Lord,
who wielded for our welfare
God's mighty two-edged sword.

The archangel Michael is mentioned just five times in the Bible, in these verses: Jude 9; Daniel 10:13, 21; Daniel 12:1; Revelation 12:7.

From the Foundation of the World
Revelation 13:8-10

From the foundation of the world,
    the Lamb of God was set
to suffer, die, and rise again
    to pay your every debt.

From the foundation of the world,
    His Book of Life was filled
with every true believer's name—
    so let your doubts be stilled.

The New Song
Revelation 14:1-3

In heaven is but one occupation:
the singing of the song of salvation,
the new song that has opened heaven's door.

Now let us earthlings learn to sing it more,
attracting other souls to gather round
and join the choir that is heaven bound.

The Song of Moses and the Lamb
Revelation 15:2-4

The saints of God on the glassy sea
were singing a hymn with harps in hand:

"Your works are mighty and marvelous, O God!
You are the Almighty Lord who lives to save.
Ever righteous and ever true
from age to age are all Your ways.
Who can fail to fear You, Father of all,
and to glorify Your name, O Holy God?
Every nation will kneel to honor You,
for Your acts of justice have been seen by all."

The Good Thief
Revelation 16:15

When darkness plagues the earth,
the Good Thief will steal in
and from this world of sin,
will claim you as His own
and speed you to the realm
of His eternal throne,
where baptized saints in white
are basking in His light.

Your Holy Name
Revelation 17:3

Blasphemous names cover the beast:
Lord of the World is not the least,
Savior, *Divine*, *Our Lord and God*—
holy names usurped by a fraud.
O Lord, we pray You to restrain
the taking of Your name in vain.

The Fall of Babylon
Revelation 18:7-8, 20-23

"I sit as queen; I am not a widow."
This was the boast of Babylon the Great,
so spoiled by her deluding decadence
that she could not escape her fiery fate.

In one hour, she was smoking rubble,
as silent as a godforsaken tomb—
no more the pleasing airs of harp and flute,
no more the fervent vows of bride and groom.

Rejoice, O Bride of Christ, because the Lord
has judged her for what she has done to you:
She shed your blood but you are now avenged.
Rejoice that God is faithful, just, and true!

Lament of the Merchants
Revelation 18:11-17

From a safe distance, far from the smoke,
The earth's merchants will weep and moan,
lamenting their loss in a mournful song
of the sudden demise of the mighty city:

"Woe, Babylon, city of wealth,
city of commerce, consumed by fire,
once decked in purple, adorned in scarlet
and glittering sapphires and gold and silver,
furnished with marble and finest ivory,
and scented by cinnamon and citron wood
and frankincense and fragrant myrrh;

“O festive city, once celebrating
with aged wine and olive oil
and flesh of cattle cooked to perfection
and flaky pastries from finest flour,
all served in style by civil slaves;

“O mercantile city, no longer a market
for charging steeds and speedy chariots;
without a block for selling bodies and souls;
never to relish the ripened fruit
of the thriving trade of tireless sellers
suddenly stopped by your destroying fire:

“It rends our hearts to see you in ruins,
for where will we go to grow our wealth?
O ruined city, how you ruin us!”

Hallelujah!
Revelation 19:6-7

Like the roar of rushing waters
and the claps of crashing thunder
came the voice of saints and angels
singing out in holy wonder:

“Hallelujah! God is reigning!
Come and join the celebration
of the Lamb and Bride uniting
for eternal adoration.”

Judgment Day
Revelation 20:11-15

God the Father on His throne of white;
earth and heaven fleeing from His face.
Who can stand to face Him without fright?
Only those who have received His grace.

God is here to judge all humankind,
reading books of what each one has done.
Some the Lord will bless, some He will bind;
some He will embrace; some He will shun.

Blessed are the ones arrayed in white,
baptized in the blood from Jesus’ side,

while the others burn in endless night,
ruined by their unbelieving pride.

Templeless
Revelation 21:22-27

No temple in the Holy City now,
for God Almighty and the Lamb are there,
communing ever with the holy saints
in majesty and bliss beyond compare.

No need for sun and moon to give her light:
The glory of the Lord pervades her space;
the Lamb serves as her lamp forevermore;
and all behold the splendor of His face.

The city gates will nevermore be closed,
for Jesus has destroyed nocturnal threats
by dying on the cross at Calvary
to pay the price of every sinner's debts.

Safe and secure forever are the saints
from unrelenting slander, shame, and strife:
All praise to God and His atoning Lamb
for writing us into His Book of Life!

The Crucifixion, Missel de Jean Rolin, c. 1450-55.

Arbor vitae
Revelation 22:1-5

The Tree of Life yields fruit twelve times a year;
and those who tap and taste it fill with cheer.
They are content to be forever near
their antidote to falsehood, hate, and fear:
O blessed Arbor vitae, grant that we
shelter with You for all eternity.

Arbor vitae, a miniature from the Scherenberg Psalter, Strasbourg, c. 1260.