

Codex 676

Codex 676 is a beautifully produced Greek New Testament manuscript, handwritten in the 13th century. It is owned by the Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung (the Institute for New Testament Textual Research) in Münster, Germany.

The photograph is of the apostle John, as he is sitting in the “Cave of the Apocalypse” on the island of Patmos, Greece. This is the traditional site where John wrote both the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation.

The wording at the top of the icon says, in abbreviated form, “St. John, the theologian.” John as an old man is looking over his shoulder and he sees three lines coming from the corner. These represent the Trinity and in the Cave of the Apocalypse visitors can see the three cracks in the cave ceiling that this icon represents. John is writing his Gospel in this painting, as he is being directed by the Triune God.

In the middle ages, New Testament manuscripts began to have miniatures or icons of the evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) as frontispieces for each gospel. As a rule, the scribe who wrote the text out would not be the same person as the artist. There would be nothing on the backside of the icon, and often the icon would have a background painted in gold. Many of these miniatures were cut out of our handwritten manuscripts and sold separately by the thief. Codex 676 is fortunate to have the icons of Matthew, Mark, and John still within its covers.

This photograph is numbered _____ of 500.