

THE BOOK OF REVELATION: VERSE BY VERSE

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WEEK TEN

I. THE SCENE CHANGES (Revelation 4:1 - 5:14)

A. The Throne In Heaven (4:1-11)

1. John is suddenly given access to another dimension: he is enabled to see the fuller reality... (4:1)
2. John sees someone sitting on a heavenly throne... (4:2-3)
 - a. God's people would need the assurance of His absolute sovereignty...
 - b. In classic OT style, John refrains from describing the One on the throne...
 - c. He mentions various precious stones that adorned the high priest's breastplate...
 - d. The rainbow appears to serve as a halo...
3. John sees creatures surrounding the heavenly throne... (4:4, 6b-11)
 - a. ***"Twenty-four other thrones and seated on them were twenty-four elders."***
 - i. Twenty-four is likely symbolic of 12 + 12: the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles.
 - ii. Symbolizing all of the redeemed people of God in both covenants.
 - iii. Notice they are worshipping God – our essential purpose...
 - iv. ***"Lay their crowns before the throne"*** showing that all things come from and return to God.
 - b. ***"Four living creatures..."***
 - i. Four is typically symbolic of creation: four corners of the earth, four winds...
 - ii. The four creatures likely represent a collage of all animate creatures... (Ezekiel 1:4-24; Isaiah 6:2)
 - iii. The eyes likely represent their all-seeing nature...
4. John sees things coming from the heavenly throne... (4:5a)
 - a. This is taken directly from Exodus 19:16-19
5. John sees things in front of the heavenly throne... (4:5b-6)
 - a. ***"Seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God."***
 - i. Seven is the number of divine perfection.
 - ii. It is a term describing the perfect nature of the Holy Spirit.
 - iii. This reflects the terminology from Revelation 1:4 and Isaiah 11:2.
 - b. ***"A sea of glass, clear as crystal."***
 - i. The sea is typically a negative symbol in scripture: chaos, the masses... (Ps. 89:8-9; Rev. 13:1)
 - ii. God's presence completely calms the sea...

B. The Scroll and the Lamb (5:1-14)

1. John's vision focuses in on the right hand of ***"him who sat on the throne..."*** (5:1)
 - a. John sees ***"a scroll with writing on both sides..."***
 - i. Identical to Ezekiel 2:9-10.
 - ii. The scroll represents the full account of God's sovereign will for the destiny of the world.
 - b. John sees the scroll is ***"sealed with seven seals."***
 - i. Seven is the number of divine perfection and completeness...
 - ii. The scroll is securely locked.
2. John then sees and hears an angel ask, ***"Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?"*** (5:2)
 - a. The term ***"open the scroll"*** is repeated four times in this first paragraph. It is the crucial issue.
3. John discovers that not a single creature in all of creation has the authority or ability to break the seals and open the scroll. (5:3-4)
 - a. This reality shocked and saddened John... (Remember 4:1)
 - i. ***"I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside."***
4. Then the high drama begins: one of the twenty-four elders shares the great news! (5:5)
 - a. ***"Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."***
 - i. See Genesis 49:9-10; See also an updating of Isaiah 11:1, 10.
5. The next verse is a shocking twist: expecting to see a triumphant Lion, John turns and sees: ***"...a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders."*** (5:6)
 - a. Seven is the number of divine perfection.
 - i. ***"Horns"*** symbolize strength. ***"Eyes"*** symbolize all-seeing ability of the Holy Spirit.
 - ii. This follows John's understanding of the Spirit as interchangeably the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ (See the Gospel of John 13-16).
6. When the Lamb steps forward and takes ***"the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne"***, everyone before and around the throne erupts in worship to the Lamb. (5:7-14)
 - a. The divinity of Christ is on full display in this scene from the heavenly throne room:
 - i. The Lamb (Christ Jesus) is ***"standing at the center of the throne..."***
 - ii. Every creature before the throne ***"fell down before the Lamb"*** and worshipped Him.
 - iii. Notice the escalation of worship:
 - 1.) ***"The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders..."*** (5:8)
 - 2.) ***"Many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand."*** (5:11)
 - i.) Ten is the symbol for completeness - in the sense of fullness. (i.e. ten fingers, ten toes...)
 - ii.) One thousand is the symbol for largeness, hugeness. (10 x 10 x 10)
 - 3.) ***"Every creature in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea..."*** (5:13)