

# REVELATION

## AN INTENSIVE STUDY

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### Lamb and Lion: A Deep Dive into Revelation #3 The Throne, the Scroll and the Lamb

Review three principles:

- **Jesus Alone** is the true Defining Center
- All Revelation's symbols are drawn from the **Old Testament**
- Everything in the OT related to the *Old Covenant people of Israel* that was geographically local and physically visible becomes **worldwide, discerned by the Holy Spirit** and applied to the *New Covenant community of the Church*.

**Principle #4:**

**Key numbers in Revelation** are meant to be interpreted symbolically; and portray **qualities rather than quantities**. The numbers most frequently used in this symbolic sense are **3, 4, 6, 7, and 12** or multiples of these.

Each key number has a definite meaning which remains consistent throughout.  
Each number has theological implications for John's message.

**The number 3 symbolizes unity**, especially unity of purpose, and is most frequently used in portrayals of the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Ghost).

**The number 4** symbolizes that which is **worldwide in scope**. In Revelation 7 John pictures 4 angels at the 4 corners of the earth holding back the 4 winds of strife. John describes the entire population of the earth by a fourfold designation: "every tribe, nation, tongue and people (group)."

**The number 7** denotes **completion, perfection, and finality**. It is the *most crucial number* in Revelation where there are fifty-four *stated sevens* and *many unstated series* of sevens. John builds Revelation on the number 7.

**The number 6** symbolizes **the creature's inability to achieve God's rest, our continual falling short of this perfection through rebellion**. In Revelation the number 6 is used to symbolize Satan's spiritual kingdom. The word Babylon is found 6 times in Revelation (14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21). To symbolize the false worship of all rebellious humanity on earth through the deceptions of the dragon, beast, and false prophet John uses a trinity of sixes: "666 ... which is the number of man" (Rev 13:18).

**Man, woman, and the serpent were all created on the sixth day**, and without the work of Christ they cannot achieve God's salvation and rest. **Jesus died on the 6<sup>th</sup> day after six hours on the Cross, declaring: "It is finished!"**

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The number 12 always denotes **the Kingdom of God**. 12 finds its source in the 12 patriarchs from whom originated the 12 tribes of Israel (God's people) in the Old Testament; and from the 12 apostles, the spiritual leaders of the New Testament Israel (the church of Christ), thus the twenty-four elders (12 + 12) around the throne of God in Rev 4:4.

In the Kingdom's capital the 12's quickly multiply: **12 gates** of pearl, **12 foundations** of **12 different precious stones**, **12 names** in the foundations, **12 fruits** from the Tree of Life, and **every dimension of the New Jerusalem, in height and length, are all multiples of 12**.

### REVELATION 4-5

**Chapters 4 and 5** set the stage for all that follows in Revelation. They are a unit; one act with two scenes. In Scene I (Rev 4), **God Almighty is worshipped as the Judge and Creator, but the Lamb is nowhere present**. In Scene II [Rev 5] **the Lamb** enters and dominates our focus as the worthy Redeemer whose judgments will consummate the purposes of God in history.

If I could give someone **only one section of Revelation**, it would be **these two chapters**. They appear in Revelation before *the three terrifying series of eschatological judgments* appear (seals, trumpets, and bowls), and reveal God's determination to rescue all who seek His salvation.

Jesus' own words in John 14:1 summarize these two chapters:

**“Let not your heart be troubled, trust in God [Rev 4], trust also in Me [Rev 5].”**

*Starting in chapter 4*, Revelation offers us the true meaning of history, human, divine and demonic, in the time between the two advents of Christ.

This two-part vision is **the pivot point** for *all of human history*. It reveals that while God as Creator must/will judge evil in holiness, the Lamb as Redeemer has won the right to rescue and restore sinners in righteousness. This defines all that follows.

Revelation 4-5 is the interpretive center of the whole book. There are **five songs** in these two chapters. Those songs contain the **substance** of John's story.

The **first two** lift up **God as Creator** (4:8,11). The **second two** praise the **Lamb as our Redeemer** (5:9-10, 12). **The fifth song unites them** together on the Throne as the worthy recipients of the entire creation's worship.

### Revelation 4:1-2

After this I looked—and look! **A door standing open in heaven!** And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said: **“Come up here and I will show you what must take place after this.”** **At once I was in the Spirit**. And look! A **throne** in heaven with **One** sitting on it.

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For the **2<sup>nd</sup> of five times in Revelation**, John is swept up in the Spirit to heaven (4:1; see 1:10; 11:12; 17:1-3; 21:10). He beholds the **throne of the Almighty**, the symbol of God's power to rule and judge. [A Rapture this is not...]

**God's throne** now becomes the *continual reference point* from which ALL judgment activity emanates. Of the **57 times** the word **THRONE** (*thronos*) appears in the **New Testament**, **40** are in Revelation—and **17** are in these 2 chapters. It is our continual reminder that the sovereign God will triumph over the forces of darkness.

### Revelation 4:3-4

And the One who sat there had the **appearance** of jasper and ruby. A **rainbow** that shone **like an emerald encircled the throne**. Surrounding the throne were 24 other thrones and seated on them were **24 elders**. They were **dressed in white** and had **crowns** of gold on their heads.

John does NOT attempt a **literal description** of God here or anywhere in Revelation. John believes the **glory of God is best seen in the face of Jesus**.

John abstractly **describes** the “**throne-Occupant**” by reference to **3 precious stones found on the breastplate of the high priest** in ancient Israel (Exodus 28:17, 20).

So far, all the symbols connected to the throne: lightening, blazing torches, jasper, sardius, speaks of a Judge whose judgments would offer no hope to fallen man. There is no hint of mercy in any of these symbols.

Yet there is **grace** as well as judgment, **mercy** as well as justice, at this throne. So John also sees the *entire throne encircled* by “a **rainbow like an emerald in appearance**.” The emerald is green, a color in nature that the Bible writers used to denote peace and rest, e.g., Ps 23:2; Ezek 34:14-15. The **emerald** stood for the **tribe of Judah on the high priest's breastplate**.

**The rainbow is the Noahic covenant symbol of mercy** (Gen 9:13; cf. Ezek 1:28). It combines elements of **the storm (wrath) and the sunshine (grace)**, and it declared to Noah that *for all who had sought refuge in the ark God provided, the storm of judgment was over*.

The **24 elders (12+12)** around the throne symbolize **the 12 tribes of OT Israel and the 12 Apostles of the NT church**; the totality of the redeemed proleptically, according to Revelation's pattern which portrays those redeemed by Christ as with Him by faith. The 24 Elders wear the **white robes of those who overcome by the blood of the Lamb** (3:18; 6:11; 7:13-14; 19:8) and **their crowns** are *stephanoi*, which do not signify a claim to royalty (*diademata*) but signify victory in the battle (against sin) which Christ also wears as the “Son of man” (14:14; 6:2). When they **cast their crowns** before the rainbow-encircled throne (4:10), the elders are acknowledging that *their victory rests solely on God's grace*.

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### Revelation 4:5-6a

From the throne came **flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder**. In front of the throne, **seven lamps** were blazing. These are the seven-fold Spirit of God. Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

“*Flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder*” come from the throne. These are **Old Testament symbols of the divine presence** (Exodus 19:16-23; 1 Sam 7:10; 12:17-18, etc.). In Revelation, wherever a **fourth word, “earthquake,”** is added to this trio, it signifies **God's judgments** are no longer simply threatened but they are falling upon unrepentant humanity.

Thus, in the “**7th**” [final] part of the three series of eschatological judgments, **all four words always appear**. This earthquake portrays the issuing of God's wrath from the heavenly temple (6:12ff, cf. 8:5; 11:19; 16:18ff). All four symbols point back to God's theophany **at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:16-19)**; and to the earthquake and tearing of the veil in the MHP, that occurred in *the hour of God's judgment* as Jesus accepted **our judgment on the Cross (Matthew 27:51)**.

The **seven lamps blazing** before this throne are an Old Testament allusion to the Holy Spirit's role as “*the Spirit of judgment, the Spirit of burning*” (Isa 4:4). **Twice** in the book (1:4; 22:17), the Spirit is alluded to in **His evangelical role**, but *this picture of the Spirit* as a “burning fire” (4:4) reminds us that **the Spirit** (and therefore the entire Trinity) is involved in the work of divine judgment. The **Sea of Glass** will show up again in 15:1-4.

### Revelation 4:6-8

In the center, around the throne, were **four living creatures**, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was **like a lion**, the second was like **an ox**, the third had a face like **a man**, the fourth was like a **flying eagle**... Day and night they never stop saying: “**Holy, holy, holy** is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.”

It is not wise to try to be precise about the **four “living creatures”** (they are the living Zoa, not Bios—emphasizing **creation** itself). Whatever they are, the four living ZOA [creation] call forth God's judgments in the seals and again in the seven last plagues (6:3,5,7; 15:7).

### Revelation 4:10-11

They lay their crowns before the throne, saying: “**You are worthy** to receive glory and honor and power, **for** You created all things, and by Your will they were created and have their being.

The juxtaposition of the rainbow with symbols of divine wrath demonstrates that the mercy of God does not extinguish His righteous judgments, but *promises a way of escape*. That way is presented in **chapter 5**, where, **by the Lamb, God can be “both just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus”** (Rom 3:26).

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In summary, **Rev 4 creates a suspense resolved in chapter 5**. It presents **God's holiness** (His standard in judgment) and **His wrath** (God's right to act against sin). He is acknowledged as **the Creator** (4:11) which is *His right to judge all things*.

Perhaps the **two most important symbols** of chapter 4 are **the throne** and **the rainbow**. **They summarize the central problem of all theology: How can God**, in a sinful world, do **equal justice** to His holiness and His mercy? The answer is found in chapter 5. *Only the symbol of the rainbow hints of mercy and hope.*

### REVELATION 5

#### Revelation 5:1-2

Then I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne **a scroll** with writing on both sides and **sealed with seven seals**. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, *“Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?”*

In **chapter 4 John first saw the throne**. In **chapter 5** his *gaze immediately fixes* on the **seven-sealed scroll** in the right hand of God. Biblical scholars hold a diversity of opinion as to exactly what the scroll is (a will, a title deed, a prophecy, the Lamb's book of life), yet **basic unanimity as to its essential meaning**:

It is God's redemptive plan for the denouement of human history, the overthrow of evil, and the gathering of a redeemed people. . . the contents of the scroll are that complex of events, both redemptive and judicial, which will accompany the end of this world and the introduction of the world to come. [George Eldon Ladd]

The scroll is a **document** which, when *opened and executed*, will restore spiritual Israel's inheritance through the unfolding judgments and deliverances of God which continue until, and include, the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. Therefore, **the scroll symbolizes the full consummation of the plan of redemption**.

#### Revelation 5:3-4

But **no one** in heaven or on earth or under the earth **could open the scroll** or even look inside it. **I wept and wept** because **no one was found who was worthy** to open the scroll or look inside.

#### Revelation 5:5-6

Then one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more! Look, the **Lion** of the tribe of Judah, the **Root** of David, **has conquered**. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.” **Then I saw a Lamb, having been slain, yet standing** at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had **7 horns** and **7 eyes**, which is the **7-fold Spirit of God** sent out into all the earth.

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**Seventeen times** John uses **various tenses of nikao (to overcome or to conquer or to triumph)** as a call to Christians to retain eternal life. **Nikao** is used in each of the **seven letters** and once again in a **final promise to the overcomer in 21:7**. In all eight of these instances the Greek verb is **present-continuous**. The promised reward is for all "*who continues overcoming*".

But **when John speaks of Christ's victory all tentativeness disappears**. He uses the **orist form** of the same verb, **nikao**, to declare that Christ's victory is absolute; an already accomplished fact, an unqualified and complete victory; one which has already taken place at an historic moment in the past.

Since there is *no object attached to nikan*, **the Lion's victory is unlimited**. We possess victory now and continue overcoming by our trust in the *victory* Jesus has achieved on the cross (12:11). This already present, unchanging victory is the center of the Christology in Revelation.

This is the dramatic highpoint of the narrative is when the **victorious Lion and the slain Lamb** merge into **one Being**. **Hearing** that this victory is the **Lion's**, *John turns to behold this great warrior* and **he sees** a **Lamb** still bearing the marks of sacrificial slaughter. Thus the **Lamb (arnion)** is introduced and becomes **the central figure of the book (twenty eight references)** from this point forward.

**We must grasp the full impact of this impressive juxtaposition (Lion-Lamb).**

It symbolizes the **great surprise** in God's triumph over evil; it preserves God's justice (*judgment did fall on the Lamb as humanity's sin-bearer*, 1 John 2:2) as *it allows God to justify righteously those who trust in Christ* (the Lion **IS** worthy, cf. Rom 3:26). The "slain Lamb" draws on **the Passover motif** (Exodus 12:13ff) where the blood of an innocent and unblemished substitute averted the judgment of God for all who trusted in that blood.

It also draws on **Isaiah 53:4-10**: the suffering Servant "*renders Himself as a guilt offering*" on whom "*the iniquity of us all*" was placed for "*our transgressions*".

Using these two Old Testament types, John unites divine judgment and redemptive grace in the Lamb. In holy wrath God has punished sin but in the Person of a substitutionary Sufferer, the true "*Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29).

This scene is the **interpretive key for all which lies ahead**: The **Lion HAS conquered absolutely**, but **ONLY as a Lamb**—total victory through total self-sacrificing love. **God's amazing triumph** over sin, death, and Satan reveals **not His love of RAW power, but the power of His SACRIFICIAL love**:

By this one stroke of brilliant artistry John has given us the key to all his use of the Old Testament.... It is almost as if John were saying to us at one point after another: "**Wherever** the Old Testament says '**Lion**' read '**Lamb**. Wherever the

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Old Testament speaks of the **victory of the Messiah**, or the overthrow of the enemies of God, we are to remember that **the Gospel recognizes no other way of achieving these ends than the way of the Cross.... Omnipotence is not to be understood as the power of unlimited coercion, but as... the invincible power of self-negating, self-sacrificing love.**<sup>1</sup>

The Lamb's actions are described in the **perfect tense**: “*having taken His stand*” and “*having been slain*” emphasizing the **lasting benefits of His sacrificial death and resurrection**. John wants to show that **the “lightning” of God's wrath is never again to strike the Lamb; nor will it strike those who are “sealed” for redemption by their trust in Him** (Rev 7:3; 9:4; cf. Eph 1:13-14; 4:30).

Yet the **Lamb** is *far more than a meek sacrifice*. Divine love is invincible; therefore, John's Lamb unites three distinct qualities in one Person: self-sacrificing love (“*slain*”), invincible power (“*seven horns*”), and perfect wisdom (“*seven eyes*”). He is indeed “Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:24). Throughout, the Apocalypse portrays **the Lamb** as the “Lord of lords and King of kings” (17:14) and One whose wrath is awesome (6:15-19).

### **Revelation 5:7-8**

He went and **took the scroll** from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. And **when He had taken it**, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding **golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people**.

Rev 5:7 and forward describe **the enthronement of Christ as King**, and therefore **Judge** (14:14ff; 19:11ff). He moves to the throne and takes the scroll. Now Christ is **authorized to execute the judgments** which will conclude this age (cf. 6:1-11:17) and **inaugurate the kingdom** which belongs to the new age.

### **Revelation 5:9-10**

And they sang a **new song**, saying: “**You are worthy** to take the scroll and to open its seals, **because You were slain**, and **with Your blood** You purchased for God men and women from every tribe and language and people and nation. And You **have made them to be a Kingdom** and priests to serve our God, and **they will reign on the earth.**”

The idea of a “**new song**” is an Old Testament redemption concept. Every time God wrought a mighty deliverance for Israel and vindicated it by judging its enemies, a new song of praise was sung (Isaiah 42:10, 13, Ps 96:1-2; Exodus 15:1ff):

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<sup>1</sup> Caird, *Revelation of St. John*, pp. 74-5.

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Christ is worthy to unfold God's purposes (5:9-10), not because of His deity or but solely on the basis of His sacrificial death. **Because the Lamb was slain the saints reign!** The Cross is the decisive act which legitimatizes Christ's right to determine mankind's destiny. Now the slain but risen Lamb will act as our Judge (6:16; 14:14) because He first came as our Redeemer.

Henceforth in the Apocalypse the term “**judgment**” is *equivalent to wrath* (14:7ff; 16:5ff; 19:2,11). For John, the **judgment** (*krima or krisis*) of the faithful church came **in the death of Christ** (cf. John 3:16-19).

More precisely, the **true church** was created as the “*kingdom of God*” from otherwise diverse and alienated peoples *when Jesus lifted their judicial guilt and bore their just penalty*, as Rev 1:5-6 and 5:9-10 clearly state. Thus, **none of the divine judgments in the Apocalypse are aimed at God's true people** (Rev 7:3; 9:4; 14:1, 6-12, 20; 17:14).

### **Revelation 5:11-12**

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they were saying: “**Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain**, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” [7-fold adoration]

### **Revelation 5:13-14**

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: “To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be **praise and honor and glory and power**, for ever and ever!” The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Therefore, “**the Lamb**” now dominates every major section of Revelation.

Because of His sacrifice, the **Lamb is worthy to open the seals** which summon the forces of judgment against His enemies. In the last judgment, it is exclusion from “**the Lamb's book of life**” which results in eternal death (20:15; cf 3:8). All that follows chapter 5 is the story of the **Lamb's “active consummation of the work begun at Calvary.**