

How To Study Revelation

Week 5: The Throne and The Lamb pt. 2

Seven Theological Themes of Revelation¹

- The Throne: The Reign of God and the Lamb
 - God the creator reigns.
 - Jesus, the redeemer and slaughtered Lamb, is Lord.
 - They rule together on one throne.
 - Their reign is past, present, and future.
- The Reality of Evil and Empire
 - Evil is real and depicted in imperial terms
 - The nature of empire is the control of power
 - Empire promises life but delivers death (both spiritual and physical)
- The Temptation to Idolatry and Immorality
 - Idolatry often seduces the Christian Church.
 - Imperial idolatry may seem appealing because of the investiture of religious meaning and authority.
- The Call to Covenant Faithfulness and Resistance
 - Amid empire and civil religion, the Church has a calling of resistance.
 - The Church stands in contrast to evil and empire with covenant faithfulness to God.
 - Resistance requires spiritual discernment and may result in various kinds of suffering.
- Worship and an Alternative Vision
 - The spiritual discernment of the church requires an alternative vision of God and reality that unveils and challenges empire.
 - This vision is an alternative to the deception of power represented by empire.
 - Revelation provides this by focusing on the throne of the eternal holy God, the faithful slaughtered Lamb, and the coming of a new creation.
- Faithful Witness: The Pattern of Christ

¹ Gorman, Michael J. Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness: Following the Lamb into the New Creation (pp. 107-108). Cascade Books, an Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers.

- Christian resistance follows the pattern of Jesus: faithful, trustworthy, courageous, just, and nonviolent.
- The pattern is observable in Jesus's apostles, martyred saints, and prophets.
- This is active, not passive, with Christians pursuing communities of individuals dedicated to life with God as an alternative to the empire's culture of death.
- The Imminent Judgment and Salvation/New Creation
 - God the creator and Christ the redeemer take evil and injustice seriously.
 - God and Jesus will judge humanity and save the cosmos, renewing creation.
 - The will of God is for all to follow the Lamb.

The Lamb on the Throne (Rev 5)

- The Scroll
 - In the right hand of the one seated on the throne (God the creator).
 - The scroll had writing on the front and back, which would be highly unusual for documents in antiquity.
 - The scroll had seven seals creating a sense of expectancy of a divine decree (Ezek 2:9-10).
 - Seals often denote legal authority and were used for decrees, wills, or legally binding documents.
 - There are different interpretations as to the contents of the scroll, including Scripture, the Book of Life (Rev 20:12), and a legal document. Most believe it to be God's eschatological² plan.
 - It appears no one is worthy to open the scroll, which is highly distressing (Isa 6:8).
- The Lamb
 - The only one worthy enough to open God the creator's scroll.
 - John hears the one worthy is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" (Gen 49:9-10; Isa 11:1-10).
 - Both images invoke messianic power and rule.

² Eschatology /,eskə'täləjē/ - the study of last things.

- John turns and does not see a lion but a slaughtered lamb (Isa 53:7; John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:19).
 - There is no doubt that the Lamb is Jesus.
 - The Lamb presents a contrast to the lion.
 - The lion is powerful, ruling, conquering.
 - The Lamb is innocent, meek, and appears defeated.
 - "The shock of this reversal discloses the central mystery of the Apocalypse: God overcomes the world, not through a show of force but through the suffering and death of Jesus, 'the faithful witness [martyr] (1:5)." – Richard Hays
 - READ BOOK
- The Lamb is the central figure of Revelation. Chapters 1-4 lead up to the Lamb, and chapters 6-22 flow from the Lamb.
- The Lamb is seen as slaughtered but is not powerless.
 - Seven eyes – perfectly sees
 - Seven horns – perfect wisdom (Isa 11:1-3; Ps. 132:17)
- The Lamb shares dominion with God the Creator – they are both on the throne.
- The Power of the Lamb
 - His Death
 - Jesus's death may appear as a defeat, but in reality, it is a victory. Through death, Jesus brings people of all nations into the Kingdom of God.
 - The sacrifice of the Lamb has the power to transform the believer's life.
 - The imagery of the Lamb and of "a kingdom and priests serving our God" (5:10; Exod 19:6) is reminiscent of the Passover and Exodus stories, only this time, the redeemed people come, not from one nation, but "from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev 5:9; 7:9; 21:24; 22:2).
 - His Word
 - The messages to the seven churches use the phrase "the words of..." to emphasize the power of Jesus to instruct the churches (Rev 2:1, 8, 12, 18, 3:1, 7, 14).
 - His word is associated with a sword (Romans 8:31, Rev 1:26, Rev 19:15).

- The Throne and the Lamb
 - The Lamb is equal with God, the creator on the throne.
 - Rev 5:8-14 depict escalating worship of the Lamb that correlates with Phil 2:5-11.
 - Jesus shares the Father's white hair (Rev 1:14), name (Rev 1:17), and dominion (Rev 1:5-6). They share the throne (Rev 22:1,3) and divine wrath (Rev 6:16-17) and together constitute the New Jerusalem's temple of light (Rev 21:22-3). They are both the source of salvation (7:10).
 - The depiction of God the creator and Jesus the faithful and slaughtered Lamb are equally worthy of our complete devotion.
 - The Paradoxes
 - 1 – God shares sovereignty and honor, expressed in the receiving of worship, with the Messiah Jesus (Ex 34:14).
 - 2 – Jesus, worthy of worship, has exercised his messianic office and power by being slaughtered (Mt 20:25-28; Mt 18:5).