

Revelation 5: 11-14 NIV “Will you be singing in the big choir?”

“¹¹ 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.

¹² 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!’

¹³ 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!’ ¹⁴ The four living creatures said, ‘Amen,’ and the elders fell down and worshiped.”

If you check the Internet asking, “Who were the greatest writers of mystery?”

You will likely find a website entitled:
“10 Greatest Mystery Writers”

This site lists the top five as Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, Wilkie Collins, Edgar Allen Poe, and Arthur Conan Doyle.¹

That website features these comments:

“Mystery is one of the most popular genres of stories. A mystery explores the dark lives and unexplained secrets of the world. Something that makes the genre so irritable.”

During my preteen and teen years I read many mystery novels and created lots of mystery for my parents.

This hardly qualifies me to comment on the accuracy of this “10 Greatest” list.

On the other hand, consider two facts: First, in most mystery novels, you discover “who done it” in the last few paragraphs. Second, Bible scholars read through the *Book of Revelation* numerous times and still scratch their heads in bafflement.

¹ The name Wilkie Collins didn’t ring my memory bells, but he was a contemporary and friend of Charles Dickens.

One commentator said that Revelation has as many riddles as it does words.

Martin Luther, who had many churches named after him, didn't even think *Revelation* belonged in the New Testament.

“It is not a biblical book,” griped another famous reformer.²

If scholars can't figure out *Revelation's* mystery after multiple readings, it's in a class by itself, isn't it?

Would you agree that the writer of *Revelation* stands alone in a category where no one else qualifies?

That means today's reading comes from the greatest mystery ever written.

The Revelation is novel, but not a novel; every word is true.

Note these further curiosities:

Poll 10,000 English speaking persons, asking them what the word “revelation” means, what answers would you get?

Exposé, reveal, disclosure?

² See *The Revelation of John*, Volume 1 William Barclay, The Westminster Press, p. 1 for sources and substantiation of these comments.

Next, poll those same 10,000 persons asking them to define the word “apocalypse.”

What definitions would you expect?

Disaster, Armageddon, catastrophic end of the world?

Let me share another oddity with you:

- Twenty English versions of the Book of *Revelation* begin with either “A Revelation...” or “The Revelation of Jesus Christ...”
- The modern speech translation known as The Message varies most, beginning: “A revealing...”

Yet the first word in *Revelation's* original language (Greek) is “apocalypsis.”³

This term, from which English apocalypse comes, means to reveal or to disclose.

***Revelation's* first three Greek words are: “Apocalypse (revelation) of Jesus Christ.”**

How do we rectify this mix-up?

Put the situation in comic book terms.

Imagine Clark Kent, Lois Lane, and many innocent people in a restaurant.

³ (Αποκάλυψις).

Bad guys storm in with heavy weapons ready to harm everyone in the place.

There’s not time for Clark Kent to sneak off and remove his reporter disguise.

In front of everyone, Clark takes off his glasses, rips off his suit, and reveals himself as Superman, quickly dispensing the bad guys.

An apocalypse (a revealing of Kent’s Superman identity) just occurred.

Superman’s apocalypse meant good news for Lois Lane and the innocent people.

But disaster for the bad dudes.

For some reason, though, folks tend to focus on the bad stuff, true?

That’s unfortunate because this book called “Apocalypse” (*Revelation*) overflows with great news for folks who trust Jesus.⁴

Apocalypse merely means reveal or disclose, whether good or bad, so let’s move on.

⁴ Here’s a strange irony; one Spanish translation, *Nueva Biblia Latinoamericana*, begins La Revelación, but the Spanish title of the book is EL APOCALIPSIS. Apocalypse appears as noun, or possibly adjective, 15 times in the New Testament. The verb form ἀποκαλύπτω appears 26 times in the NT always meaning “reveal.”

Revelation is in coded language, but not just one kind of encryption; it uses several codes.

To find *Revelation*’s secrets, we need several keys (just like school janitors): today we’ll look at three of them.

1) The first key relates to numbers.

Virtually every number symbolizes something. **Failure to recognize this leads to continual confusion.**

References to the number three, for instance, often signify disaster or evil.⁵

Yet sentences that list three equal phrases usually indicate God or Christ as John’s greeting in Revelation 1:4, 5 demonstrates:

“John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood . . .”

⁵ 6:6, 8:13, 9:18 e.g., but see 21:13, where all four sides of the New Jerusalem have three gates.

Threes also appear in the praise given to God.

Note these examples in chapter 4:

‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.’ 9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: 11 “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

So though the number three tends to symbolize bad, triplet phrases usually indicate the Divine.

Fours usually point to earth and creation:

Verse 14 of our text refers to the four living creatures.

We first met the four living creatures in chapter 4 near the throne praising God.

Chapter 5: 9 links 4s with creation as the 24 elders say: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were

slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.”

“Fours” point us to humanity and creation.

Sevens are complete numbers throughout the Bible from beginning to the end.

The latter part of verse 6 of chapter 5 reads:

“The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.”

Tens represent created life related to history and civilization: “Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand.”

Be wary of trying to calculate anything based on Revelation’s numbers.

The supposed 1000 year reign of Jesus in chapter 20 fools many folks.

They forget the numeric symbolism: 10 x 10 x 10 equals 1000.

Twelves represent God’s covenants and promises to his followers:

Twelve tribes of Israel; twelve Apostles; the 24 elders in our chapter might signify both.

2) –Key number two, Music and Poetry

Songs and Poetry often reveal the theme and meaning of puzzling passages.

3) – Key number three, symbols of Christ found in other parts of the Bible:

The Lamb- Isaiah 53:7 refers to the suffering servant messiah, who was “led like a lamb to the slaughter.” John the Baptist identified Jesus as “the Lamb of God, who takes the sin of the world.”⁶

“**Lion of the tribe of Judah**”;

“Root of David.”

Using these three keys (numbers, music, symbols of Christ), we can unlock much of Revelation 5’s meaning.

Revelation 5: 1-10 NIV

“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.

⁶ John 1:29; Both Matthew (1:3) and Luke (3:33) trace Jesus’ genealogy through the Israelite tribe of Judah. Jesus is also the “Root of David,” because he created him (John 1:1-5).

God created and controls the Cosmos.

As ruler and king, he rules from his throne. **He holds a scroll with writing on both sides** (no one can add to or subtract from the scroll). **Seven seals completely protect and hide the scroll’s contents—our future. Verse 5:2**

“And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?’”

A powerful, booming-voiced messenger shouts: “Who can open this thing?”

No created being was worthy; John wept. Verses 5: 3 & 4

“³ But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. ⁴ I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside.”

Today many folks are already predicting the outcome of the 2020 elections, yet many events will occur before that time, which no human being foresees; only God knows the future. **Unless we follow Christ, we shall be totally unprepared**

5: 5 “Then one of the elders said to me, “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.**”

Jesus was born of the Israelite tribe, Judah of David’s lineage. Jesus is God; he created David and all of us so Jesus is David’s and our root.

Only Jesus qualifies to reveal the contents of the scroll because:

A) He triumphed over Satan by resisting all his temptations.

B) When evil men killed him, he came back from the death. No other human being stands as a winner (nike in Greek) as Christ. **He arose victorious over the devil and the grave.**

5:6, 7 “Then I saw 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. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.”

Jesus, the Lamb, triumphed, came back from the slaughter; no one else ever has.

The fact that he stands in the center of the throne strongly symbolizes his divinity.

His seven horns indicate his limitless power; his seven eyes prove he possesses the fullness of God’s Spirit.

He takes the history-scroll from God’s hand. All Creation (4 living creatures) and the 24 elders (presbyters) probably worship leaders bow to Jesus acknowledging his Divine nature.

5:8 “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.

With their harps (ancient guitars) and their incense they intercede for God’s people who pray while undergoing trials and tribulations.

The lyrics of the totally new song tell us the meaning of the highly symbolic scene.

“⁹ 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 persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.¹⁰ You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.’”

By going to the cross and dying, and rising from death, Jesus proved his power and worthiness to take control of all things.

He paid the cost for people of all nations and backgrounds to come to God and submit to his rule. God is no respecter of persons --Acts 10:34, Peter:

“‘I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.’”

The kingdom began with Christ’s rule as Lord. “God has made him Lord and Christ, this Jesus who you crucified (Acts 2: 37):

Recall the new song in verse 12 of our text?

“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”

Note the complete seven due the Lamb.

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!’¹⁴ The four living creatures said, ‘Amen,’ and the elders fell down and worshiped.”

The “fours of creation” exalt both God and Jesus the Lamb.

A mighty chorus representing all creation honors both God and the Lamb (Christ).

The Living Beings affirm from “Amen corner.” The 24 elder worship leaders precede creation in bowing to honor Father and Son.

We become winners by honoring God through his Son.

Bottom line: Jesus is more than a prophet or a good man; He is God.

During his ministry Jesus warned:

(Luke 17: 26-30): “As...in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building . . . the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is **revealed.**”

Revealed is our word **apocalypse**.

Jesus’ apocalypse will be good and bad.

For those who fail to honor the son, but merely go about: **eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building...** it will not be a happy day.

If we honor, praise, and dedicate our lives serving the only one who controls the future, who overcame evil and came back from the dead, it will be a great day of singing in the mightiest choir ever.

What will you be doing on the day of Jesus’ apocalypse, the day He is fully revealed?

God bless you as you serve Him through our Lord Jesus Christ!

Bob Blair
P O Box 176
Cleghorn, IA 51014

www.robertblairbooks.com