

INTRO: Explain ice fishing to RGV or Ghana students. Most of Rev. contains symbolism; unlike Gospels, Acts, epistles. Background is Rev. 4; John taken to heaven from Patmos to see One on a throne with a book/scroll. Laments no one can open seal and read it. Lamb takes it. Sermon will start with a review of the text's symbolism.

I. BIBLICAL APOCALYPTIC SYMBOLISM

A. Throne (v.11)

1. symbol of authority, dominion, rule
2. occupant is 'One' who gives book to Lamb/Jesus; i.e., God the Father

B. The Lamb (v.6, 8, 12, 13) - prominent character here

1. reminiscent of Old Testament sacrifices
2. was slain (v.12) not 'died'; is alive, living in heaven
3. John Baptizer: Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world

C. Scroll (v.8) (Greek **biblios**)

1. not defined! something recorded; unknown to the rest of us
2. our sins? our names in a book? the future? way of salvation?
3. I believe that I cannot...; Thomas: How can we know the way?

D. Four living creatures (v.8, 14)

1. I'm not positive; one commentary counts 21 interpretations
2. #4 = earth; creatures = created; someone from earth now in heaven?
3. cp. v.9 every tribe/tongue/people/nation (4) with a 'new song'
4. I think they represent all believers in heaven

E. Harp/new song (vv.8-9)

1. 'new' = good, better (new wine vs. old sour stuff)
2. harp, new song = perfect praise

F. Golden bowls with the harps (v.8)

1. explained by 'prayers of the saints' (I say 'praise' not 'petitions')
2. incense bowls = Ps.141:2 Let my prayer be set before Thee as...

G. Twenty four elders

1. New Testament 'elders' usually means 'pastors'; **presbyteroi**
2. 12 tribes + 12 apostles = leaders of those whom God has called

H. Angels (can be 'pastors' or can be actual created spiritual beings)

1. myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands
2. too many to be 'pastors'; ergo, heaven's created spiritual beings
3. probable Hebraism; cp. 'King of kings' large, innumerable number

(continued)

I. Praise (v.12)

1. 7-fold; holy and complete; 3 = God; 4 = earth; 7th day 'very good'
2. power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, blessing

II. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF ALL THIS (what does this mean)

A. None but the Lamb is worthy

1. before God **we** are all worthless, helpless sinners
2. we cannot know all our sins, our future, way to heaven w/o Lamb
3. we rarely think about God and His will as we ought to do
4. we're inclined to praise self, accomplishments more than God
5. even our prayers are too infrequent, too self-centered

B. The Lamb has opened the book to us and for us

1. through Jesus, the rest of the Bible makes more sense
2. e.g., Old Testament lamb slaying foretold Jesus' self-sacrifice
3. John saw His suffering, crucifixion for sins of whole world
4. v.9 (!) You...have redeemed us to God by Your blood (pivotal!)
5. because He is risen, ascended, so shall also every believer
6. Baptizer confessed Lamb; God counts faith as righteousness
7. Lamb now nourishes us in Holy Supper for our journey to heaven

C. Angels and elders and created ones praise God and the Lamb

1. v.8 - both creatures and elders have bowls full of praise
2. we all may pray, praise, and give thanks; here, until He Returns
- 3 first and foremost, for the Lamb and all HE has accomplished
4. and for opening the book that we may know a bit of the mind of God
5. our praise here and now is echoed also in heaven: joined

D. Look forward to eternal joy in the presence of God in heaven

1. perhaps the most encouraging aspect of this text (coming/advent)
2. I plan to praise Him just for the gratitude of getting there
3. until then we await the meeting with the enthroned Lamb

CONCLUSION: What a great God we have, to become one of us and to pay the cost for all our sins, and to assure us of our place with Him in heaven. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing. And the four living creatures say... Say it with me, living creatures. And the four living creatures say, Amen.