



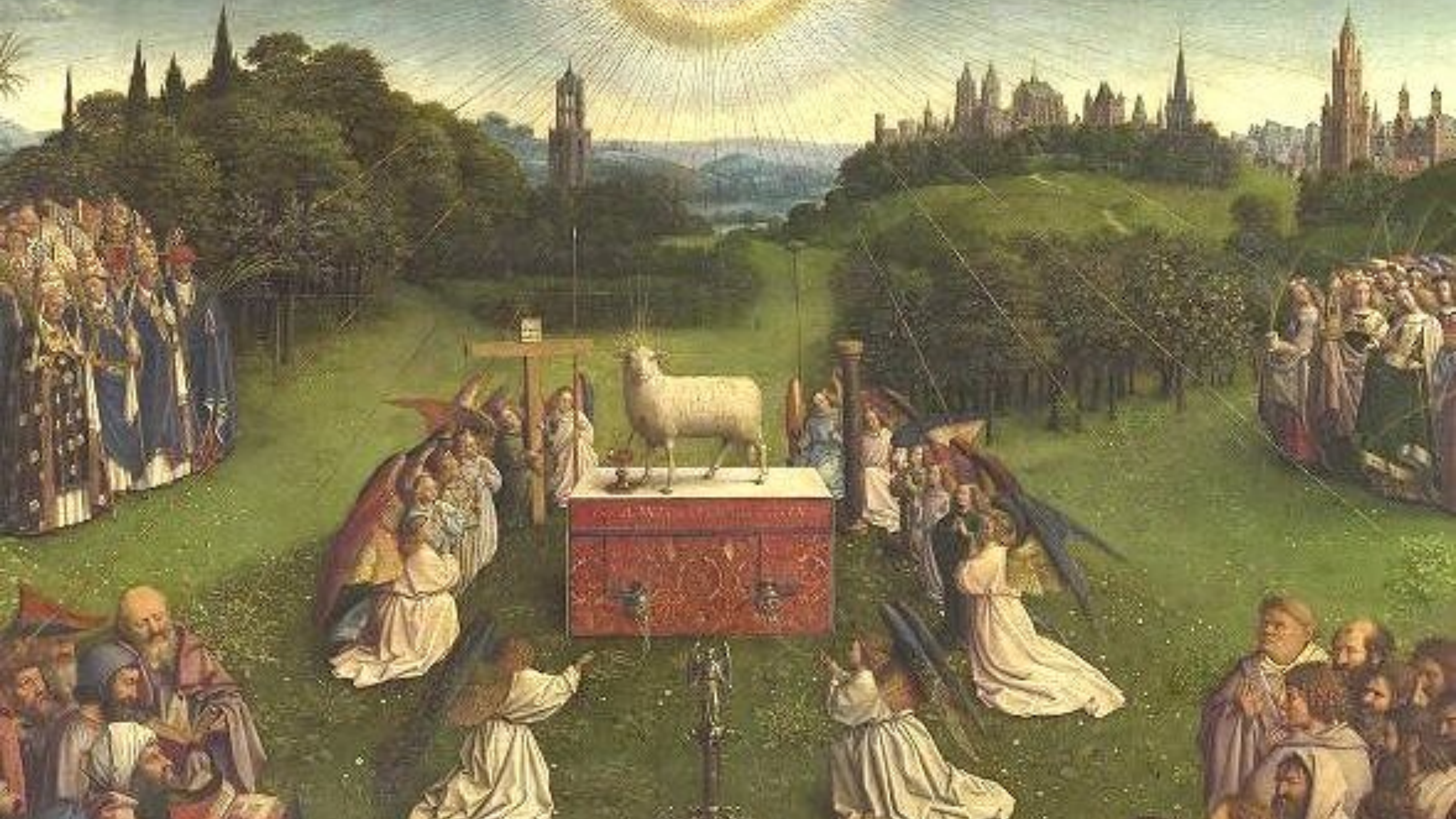
THE REVELATION TO ST. JOHN

**WHAT MOST PEOPLE
IMAGINE OF REVELATION**



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**WHAT THE REVELATION
IS REALLY ABOUT**



OVERVIEW

- ▶ The author
 - ▶ "John"
 - ▶ traditionally assumed to be the apostle John, but no clear testimony is given
 - ▶ most rejection of St. John's authorship rely on "different" literary styles between the Gospel and the the Revelation - but that only ignores the fact that John's Gospel and epistles were written under extremely different circumstances than revelation
 - ▶ not a planned out work as his Gospel was

- ▶ The author (cont'd)
 - ▶ John was the last living apostle, witnessing nearly 70 years of the church's formative years
 - ▶ John was alive when Clement, the bishop of Rome, wrote his epistle to the church at Corinth around AD 95.
 - ▶ John was originally a fisherman along with his brother James and their father Zebedee

▶ author (cont'd)

- ▶ John is the apostle and evangelist who gives the most detail about Jesus' death.
- ▶ Though starting in Jerusalem, John eventually became the bishop of the church at Ephesus, presumably before the fall of Jerusalem
- ▶ His long life served to confirm the authenticity and content of other apostolic writings. With his death, though the possibility shortly remained of something else being included in the canon, the apostolic witness to Christ was finished.

▶ Date of writing

- ▶ according to Irenaeus, during the reign of Emperor Domitian (ruled from AD 81-96)
- ▶ Brighton suggests that perhaps John wrote the Gospel as an introduction for Revelation which he had already written (Brighton, 23). Certainly, whether planned originally or not, Revelation and John's Gospel should be seen as two parts of one work.

▶ Composition

- ▶ Written using visual patterns rather than simply logical, narrative statements.
- ▶ Heavy presence of Semitic expressions and patterns
- ▶ Heavily symbolic
 - ▶ models usually lie behind symbols but they are only referents - dragons and numbers
 - ▶ heavy OT references
 - ▶ "The OT furnishes the vocabulary, mode of expression, and theological mind-set with which Revelation was written." (Brighton, 26)
- ▶ not primarily a linear description but a cyclic description or recapitulation

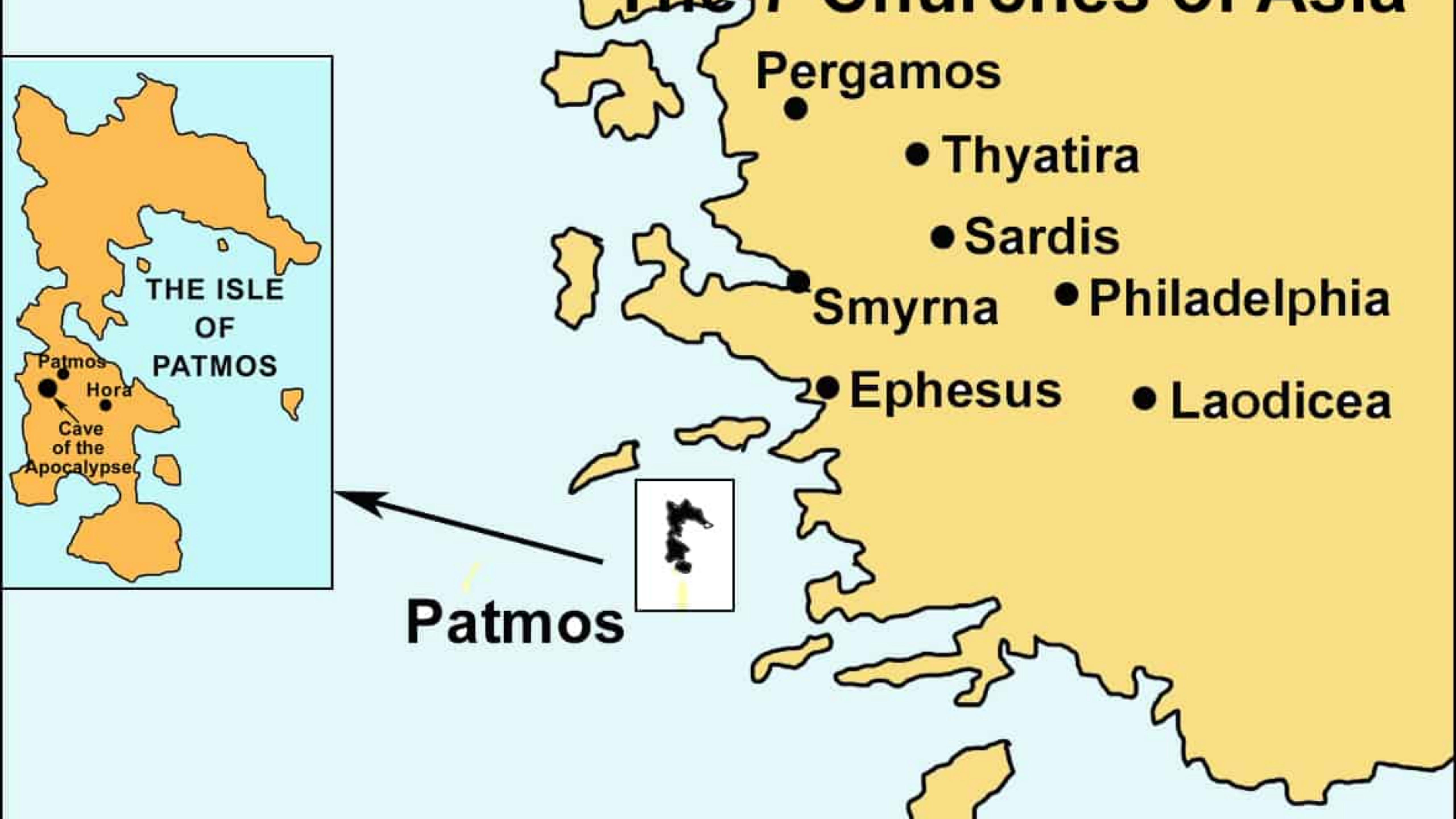
- ▶ Audience

- ▶ The seven churches in the province of Asia (1:4)
 - ▶ major centers that would serve as points of distribution
 - ▶ located in one of the wealthiest parts of the Roman Empire
- ▶ Asia was created in 129 BC, roughly the size of Nebraska
- ▶ Judaism was likely well-established in the area



Roman Provinces in Asia Minor





Pergamos

● **Thyatira**

● **Sardis**

Smyrna ● **Philadelphia**

● **Ephesus** ● **Laodicea**

THE ISLE OF PATMOS

Patmos

Hora

Cave of the Apocalypse

Patmos

- ▶ Audience (cont'd)
 - ▶ Christianity likely brought to the area in the aftermath of Pentecost
 - ▶ Paul spent about three years in Ephesus during his third missionary journey
 - ▶ Christians were under constant threat from devotion to pagan idols (Acts 19:23-41)
 - ▶ Some believe the letter was written in the face of the Neronian persecutions (AD 54-68), but most under the Domitianian persecutions (AD 81-96) during which time John was exiled to Patmos

OUTLINE

- ▶ Introduction (1:1-3:22)
- ▶ The Prophetic Message (4:1-22:5)
- ▶ The Epilogue (22:6-21)

HOW TO READ

- ▶ Apocalyptic literature - an effort to portray the future by means of strange and even fantastic symbolism. (Becker, 12)
- ▶ Historical-critical reading - attacks on authority of the time; written pseudonymously using major figure of the past; hope for a better future
 - ▶ preterist view - past, current, or easily knowable future events
 - ▶ futuristic - only descriptive of the events of the very end of time, "Jewish opinion"
- ▶ "idealistic" interpretation - general symbols

INTRODUCTION

1:1-3:22

- ▶ Ἀποκάλυψις - apocalypse/revelation
 - ▶ a revealing of Jesus Christ to John to be given to the church, regarding the things that were necessary to take place soon.
 - ▶ *See Worthy Is the Lamb, 15-16*
- ▶ What is revealed "must soon take place"
 - ▶ "the things that are necessary to happen in speed/haste"
- ▶ The idea of John as one who bears witness or gives his testimony (ἔμαρτύρησεν) is prominent in both John's Gospel and Revelation.

- ▶ By calling the readers and hearers “blessed” John is giving clear indication that he is recording Scripture.



ADDRESSES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

- ▶ Words from Jesus through John to the churches
 - ▶ “seven” occurs 55 times in Revelation; 373 times throughout the entire Scriptures and bears with it the significance of completeness/perfection from creation
 - ▶ 7 real churches AND
 - ▶ the whole Christian Church on earth
 - ▶ Major metropolitan areas

Map of the 7 Churches



- ▶ Letters contain both encouragement and warning.
- ▶ “Grace and peace”
- ▶ The Holy Trinity
 - ▶ “the One who is, who was, and who is to come” = the Father
 - ▶ the seven Spirits = the Holy Spirit (Is. 11:2)
 - ▶ Jesus Christ

- ▶ Brighton suggests that John may be closing the canon of Scripture by invoking the Trinity - no further revelation is to be sought.
- ▶ Doxology, ascription of glory to Christ
 - ▶ who loved us
 - ▶ freed us by His Blood
 - ▶ made us a kingdom and priests to God

- ▶ Christ's return in glory
 - ▶ a day of joy for His people
 - ▶ a day of bitter sorrow for those who refused Him
- ▶ The opening vision
 - ▶ A common tribulation, kingship/kingdom, and endurance that are in Jesus (Jhn 15:18-26)

- ▶ “In the Spirit/in spirit on the Lord’s Day” (cf 4:2, 17:3, 21:10)
 - ▶ during the Divine Service
 - ▶ hearing the Word of God
- ▶ John is commanded to write what he is given to see (Scripture)
- ▶ Christ in the midst of the Church
 - ▶ seven lamp stands (seven churches, the fullness of the Church)
 - ▶ one like the son of man (Dan. 7:14; Christ’s many references to Himself as the Son of Man)



ONE LIKE A SON OF MAN

- ▶ John begins to write in the first person
- ▶ How does John describe himself in relationship to the churches?
 - ▶ brother - equal
 - ▶ partner in suffering/tribulation, in kingdom, and in patience
- ▶ Whose suffering are John and the churches enduring?
- ▶ Where is John when he receives the vision?

- ▶ What does John mean when he says that he was “in the Spirit”?
 - ▶ What John records is from the Holy Spirit and is thus Scripture
 - ▶ John is about the things of the Spirit - meditation on the Word and receiving the Holy Sacraments
- ▶ What is “the Lord’s Day”?
 - ▶ Sunday - already the Church had moved the Sabbath Day to Sunday in honor of the Lord’s resurrection

- ▶ What does the great voice sound like?
 - ▶ Trumpets are associated with power, battle, victory, royalty and celebration
 - ▶ John also describes Jesus voice as "the roar of many waters"
- ▶ Who does John see?
 - ▶ Jesus
 - ▶ Read Daniel 7:9-14 and 10:1-21

▶ How is Jesus described?

- ▶ in the midst of the lampstands - Jesus is with and among His Church though He is glorified
- ▶ long robe - priestly garment
- ▶ golden sash around His chest - royalty
- ▶ white hair - purity, wisdom, Ancient of Days
- ▶ eyes like flames of fire - piercing vision, the Holy Spirit, purifying vision
- ▶ feet like burnished bronze - power over His enemies, strength
- ▶ voice like the roar of water - authority, power

- ▶ holding seven stars - angels, seven-fold presence of the Holy Spirit, pastors
- ▶ a two-edged sword in His mouth - the Word of God, Law and Gospel
- ▶ the sun shining in full strength - divinity, divine glory

- ▶ What does John's vision demonstrate to us?
 - ▶ Jesus is God and shares in all of the divine attributes
- ▶ What is John's response to standing in Jesus' resurrected and glorified presence?
 - ▶ falling down as if dead - repentance and humility
- ▶ What does Jesus say to the terrified John?
 - ▶ "Stop being afraid." - forgiveness which is rooted in Jesus' death and resurrection.

- ▶ What are the seven stars and the seven lampstands?
 - ▶ stars - angels (messengers)/pastors
 - ▶ right hand - power and authority
 - ▶ lampstands - churches
- ▶ Why stars and lampstands
 - ▶ sources of light - Jesus is the light of the word and therefore so are those who proclaim Him



THE SEVEN LETTERS

EPHESUS



- ▶ Ephesus contained a well-known temple of Artemis (Diana), the Greek goddess of the hunt, nature, and chastity.
- ▶ Some traditions hold that Ephesus was the last residence of the Virgin Mary who would have been brought there by St. John.
- ▶ Founded by St. Paul on his third missionary journey sometime between AD 53 and 56. Paul clashed with the silversmith Artemis, who feared the destruction of his business and the foundation of the city.

STRUCTURE OF THE LETTERS

- ▶ The direction to write
- ▶ A description of Jesus, drawn from chapter 1
- ▶ A commendation for what is good in the congregation
- ▶ A rebuke for weakness in the congregation
- ▶ An exhortation to hear
- ▶ A promise to those who hear

- ▶ Description of Jesus - the one who holds the seven stars and walks among the lampstands
 - ▶ Jesus is the one who preserves His pastors and they speak with His authority (Is. 41:10; Mtt 28:20)
 - ▶ Jesus is the one who is in the midst of the churches (Mtt. 18:20)
- ▶ Commendation
 - ▶ The work and toil and patient endurance of the congregation
 - ▶ Rejection of false apostles

▶ Rebuke

- ▶ They had abandoned their “first love” - they had grown cold and indifferent to the love of God in Christ Jesus. This would, in turn, have meant a growing lack of love for the saints, which love St. Paul had commended in his letter to the congregation.
- ▶ Christ warns that He will remove their lampstand from His presence if they do not repent and return to their first love. The door was still open to repentance but would not remain so forever.

- ▶ Commendation
 - ▶ Hatred of the works of the Nicolaitans - antinomian sect that encouraged sexual immorality and idolatry
- ▶ Admonition to hear the words of the Spirit
- ▶ Promise
 - ▶ Given to those who conquer



SMYRNA

- ▶ Smyrna

- ▶ Modern Izmir in Turkey

- ▶ The first city in the ancient world to build a temple to the goddess of Rome. Also built a temple to the emperor Tiberius, Livia, and the Roman senate

- ▶ Had both a strong allegiance to Rome and a large Jewish population

- ▶ The description of Jesus
 - ▶ the First and the Last
 - ▶ interpreted by "the one who was dead and came back to life"
 - ▶ the cause and the goal of faith - He whose death and resurrection obtained eternal life and the One who is and who gives life

- ▶ Commendation

- ▶ "I know your suffering and your poverty"

- ▶ severe threat of persecution from the Jews and the Romans

- ▶ suffering material poverty

- ▶ Polycarp of Smyrna was the bishop of Smyrna who was martyred for his faith. Polycarp was a student of Irenaeus who was a student of St. John.

- ▶ "I know the blasphemy"
- ▶ Jews who seem to have snuck in and claimed to be the true Christians and inheritors of God's promises
- ▶ Christ calls them what they truly are - a synagogue of Satan (they follow the lies of Satan [cf. John 8:39-47; Romans 2:28-29])

▶ Rebuke

- ▶ "Stop fearing"
- ▶ Perfect love drives out fear. If we fear suffering or the persecutions of men, then we will be tempted to abandon Christ who is to be our first love.
- ▶ God has set the time and intensity of their suffering ("ten days"). Satan cannot operate outside the bounds set by God. God's will will be done.
- ▶ They and we need to keep our focus only on Christ who strengthens us and through whom we will gain the victory.
- ▶ The reward for endurance is the crown of life

- ▶ Exhortation to hear
 - ▶ hear what the Spirit says
 - ▶ the unity of Christ and the Holy Spirit
- ▶ The promise to those who hear and keep the word
 - ▶ they will not be harmed by the second death



The Stoa

PERGAMUM

- ▶ Description of Jesus

- ▶ Him who has the sharp two-edged sword

- ▶ Commendation

- ▶ “you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells”

- ▶ Rebuke

- ▶ some who hold to the teaching of Balaam (Num. 25)

- ▶ some who hold to the teachings of the Nicolaitans

- ▶ Call to repent

- ▶ "I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of My mouth"

- ▶ Exhortation to hear
- ▶ Promise to obedient hearers
 - ▶ "To the one who conquers, I will give:
 - ▶ some of the hidden manna
 - ▶ a white stone
 - ▶ a new name"



THYATIRA

- ▶ Description of Jesus

- ▶ the Son of God who has eyes like flames of fire and feet like burnished bronze

- ▶ Commendation

- ▶ works, love, faith, service, patient endurance

- ▶ growth in works

- ▶ Rebuke

- ▶ toleration of Jezebel

- ▶ calls herself prophetess

- ▶ teaching and seducing to sexual immorality and eating food sacrificed to idols

- ▶ refused repentance

- ▶ Consolation

- ▶ Christ knows those who have not been deceived and encourages them toward steadfastness

- ▶ Promise

- ▶ authority over the nations
- ▶ rule with a rod of iron
- ▶ morning star (Rev. 22:16)

- ▶ Exhortation to hear



SARDIS

- ▶ Description of Jesus
 - ▶ Him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars
- ▶ Commendation
 - ▶ a little remains
- ▶ Rebuke
 - ▶ you are dead

- ▶ Call to repentance
 - ▶ remember what you received and heard
 - ▶ I will come like a thief
- ▶ Commendation
 - ▶ a few who have not soiled their garments

▶ Promise

- ▶ they will walk with Christ in white robes which Christ will bestow upon them
- ▶ their names will not be blotted out of the book of life
- ▶ Christ will confess their names before His Father and before His angels

▶ Exhortation to hear



PHILADELPHIA

- ▶ Description of Jesus
 - ▶ the holy one
 - ▶ the true one
 - ▶ who has the key of David
 - ▶ who opens and no one will shut
 - ▶ who shuts and no one opens

- ▶ Commendation

- ▶ you have kept My word and not denied My name

- ▶ those in the synagogue of Satan will bow down to them

- ▶



LAODICEA

- ▶ Description of Jesus
 - ▶ the Amen
 - ▶ the faithful and true witness
 - ▶ the beginning of God's creation

▶ Rebuke

▶ you are neither cold nor hot

▶ prideful in prosperity

▶ Warning

▶ I will spit you out of My mouth

- ▶ Call to repentance
 - ▶ Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline
- ▶ Promise
 - ▶ To those who give heed to Christ's Word, He will enter and eat with them
 - ▶ To the one who conquers, Christ will grant him to sit on His throne
- ▶ Exhortation to hear



THREE PROPHETIC VISIONS



THE SEVEN-SEALED SCORE



SEVEN TRUMPET ANGELS



INTERREGNUM



SEVEN CENSER ANGELS



HEAVENLY THRONE ROOM

- ▶ Four living creatures
 - ▶ The closest in proximity to God and His throne
 - ▶ Similar to creatures of Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 10
- ▶ Four-faces
 - ▶ Man - St. Matthew
 - ▶ Lion - Mark
 - ▶ Ox - Luke
 - ▶ Eagle - John

- ▶ Wings

- ▶ Movement

- ▶ Covering

- ▶ Eyes

- ▶ Clarity of sight/understanding/knowledge

- ▶ Hymn of praise

- ▶ mentioned by John and Isaiah; Ezekiel only mentions rumblings that gave praise

- ▶ Cherubim

- ▶ Prominent in OT worship

- ▶ overshadowed the ark

- ▶ woven into the curtains

- ▶ placed in the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies

- ▶ carved on the doors

- ▶ cast into the bronze basins of the courtyard

- ▶ served as God's throne

- ▶ guarded the way to the Garden of Eden and the tree of life

- ▶ Cherubim have the responsibility of leading heavenly worship
 - ▶ Cherubim begin and then the rest of heaven responds (antiphonal worship)
 - ▶ We can't rightly praise God apart from the revelation of Christ in the Gospels

- ▶ Te Deum - hymn of praise
 - ▶ Holy, Holy, Holy (Trisagion)
 - ▶ God praised as the Almighty Creator
 - ▶ Built up over time throughout the revelation as way to teach
 - ▶ The praise causes the elders to fall down on their faces in worship and cast their crowns before the throne of God



THE CORONATION OF THE LAMB

THE SCROLL

- ▶ In the right hand of God
 - ▶ works salvation for God's people (Ex. 15:6,12)
- ▶ Written on both sides
 - ▶ completeness of God's Word and work
- ▶ Similar to scroll given to Ezekiel (2:9-10)
- ▶ Seven seals (Isaiah 29:11; Daniel 12:8-9)

WHO IS WORTHY TO OPEN THE SCROLL?

- ▶ No one in heaven or on earth, not even any angel
- ▶ Importance of scroll's contents for God's people indicated by John's weeping
- ▶ An elder accompanies John on the two occasions dealing most specifically with the redemption of God's people and Christ's triumphant reign (5:5; 7:13-14)

THE VICTORIOUS MESSIAH

- ▶ The Lion who is from the tribe of Judah
 - ▶ Messianic reign and power (Gen. 49:8-10)
 - ▶ Messiah would come from the line of Judah (Micah 5:2)
 - ▶ CS Lewis uses as basis for Aslan in *Chronicles of Narnia*
 - ▶ Reference to Jesus' humanity
- ▶ Root of Jesse
 - ▶ Reference to Jesus' humanity and Davidic lineage as well as His divinity

THE LAMB WHO HAS BEEN SLAIN

- ▶ Christ is worthy to open the scroll by virtue of His death and resurrection as the Son of Man
 - ▶ That victory is shared with His people. (cf. the letters to the seven churches)
- ▶ It is from the midst of the throne that the Lamb will lead his people to springs of living waters.
- ▶ The Lamb has been slain (perfect tense) but is no longer dead.

- ▶ Seven horns
 - ▶ Absolute power in heaven and on earth (cf. Matt. 28:19-20)
 - ▶ In the OT, horns most typically associated with power over the affairs of men



The 7 Seals

THE FIRST VISION

**THE OPENING OF THE
SEVEN SEALS**

THE FIRST FOUR SEALS - THE FOUR HORSEMEN

- ▶ War, pestilence, famine, death
- ▶ Mediated will of God





- ▶ The first horseman
 - ▶ description
 - ▶ white
 - ▶ battle bow
 - ▶ crown

- ▶ Conquering
 - ▶ military might
 - ▶ will be victorious
 - ▶ divine right
- ▶ All forms of tyranny among men - "Human tyrannical slavery in all its fearful forms will be the rule." (Brighton, 165)

- ▶ The second horsman
 - ▶ description
 - ▶ red
 - ▶ takes peace from the earth by slaughter
 - ▶ given a great sword

- ▶ Acting under authority - God's permissive will
- ▶ All kinds of unlawful killing and murder

- ▶ The third horseman
 - ▶ description
 - ▶ black
 - ▶ weighing scale
 - ▶ voice in the midst of the creatures

- ▶ Black is often associated with death from famine
- ▶ Scarcity of resources
- ▶ God will continue to provide for His people

- ▶ The fourth horseman
 - ▶ description
 - ▶ ghostly green
 - ▶ Death
 - ▶ the grave followed
 - ▶ authority over a fourth of the earth

- ▶ the result of the first three horsemen's work
- ▶ at any given time, a fourth of the earth is afflicted by sword, famine, disease, and the wild animals of the earth
- ▶ the work of the horsemen go on until the end
- ▶ connection between God's wrath against sin and the four horsemen

THE FIFTH SEAL

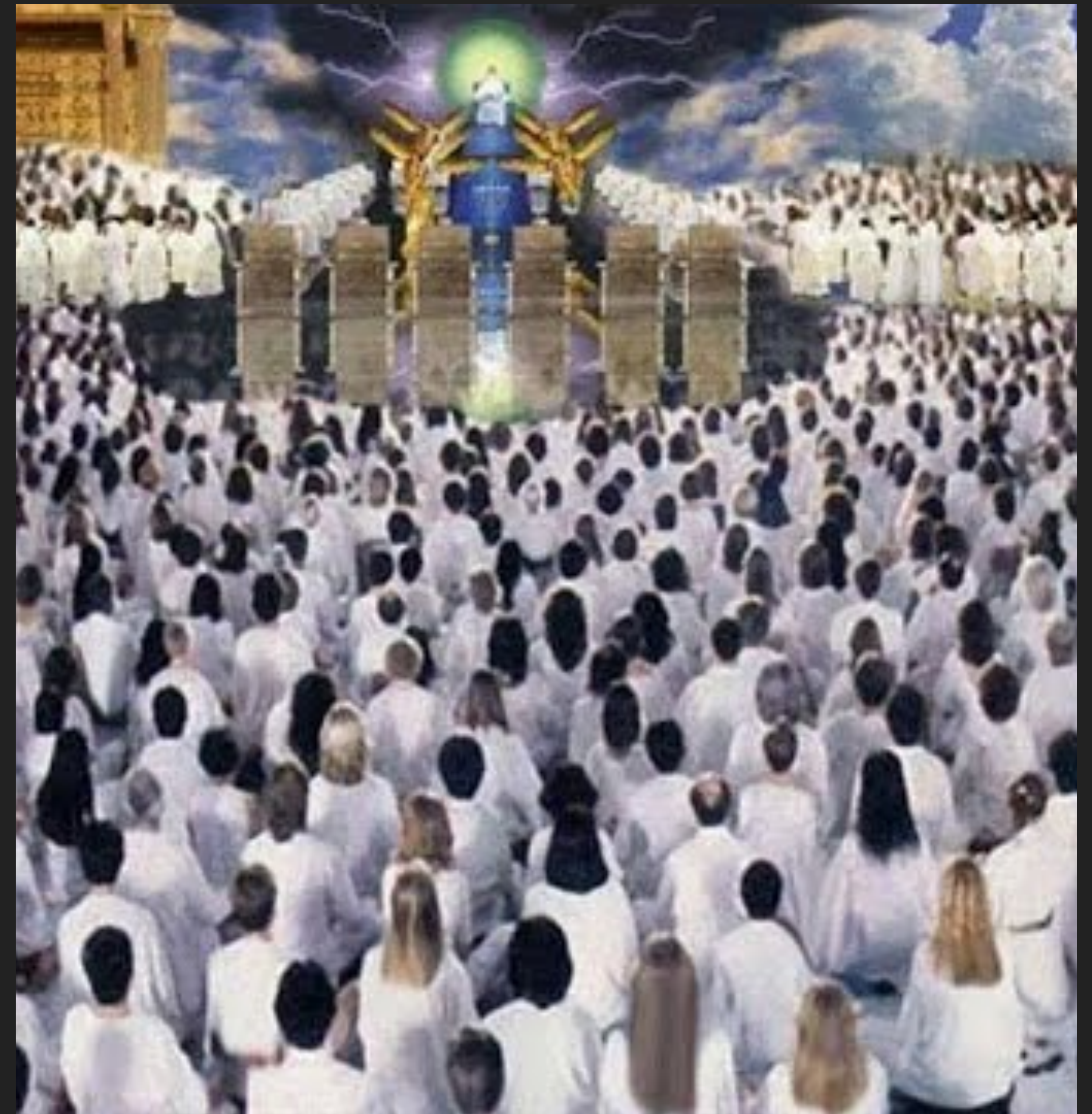
- ▶ Martyrs under the altar of incense
- ▶ Prayed that God would fulfill His vengeance on the blood of His people
- ▶ Vindication of the Lamb and the confession of the Church
- ▶ The martyrs are before the throne of God
- ▶ The martyrs are granted a white robe - their baptismal cleansing and the righteous judgment of God that will fall on their persecutors
- ▶ The martyrs are urged to remain in their rest until the work of the church on earth is accomplished

THE SIXTH SEAL

- ▶ The end of all things
 - ▶ a great earthquake
 - ▶ the blackened sun
 - ▶ the blood-like moon
 - ▶ the stars of the heavens falling
 - ▶ the heavens split open and the moving of the mountains and islands
 - ▶ the terror of the peoples

INTERLUDE: THE CHURCH MILITANT AND TRIUMPHANT

- ▶ Four angels holding back the four winds = the four horsemen
 - ▶ Zech. 6:1-8
 - ▶ Dan. 7:2-3
 - ▶ the winds of judgment are restrained but not entirely stopped
- ▶ Fifth angel from the east
 - ▶ east - rising of the sun; God's permissive will governed by the Sun of Righteousness (Mal. 4:2)



- ▶ Sealing of the servants/slaves of God
 - ▶ Mark serves as both protection and promise
 - ▶ Ezekiel 9:4 - the mark was a tau; spared people from destruction
 - ▶ Word (Numbers 16:5), Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14), Sacraments (Titus 3:4-7)
 - ▶ Mentioned again in 9:1-6
 - ▶ Name of God - 14:1,3; 22:4
 - ▶ not conversion (they are already in the 144,000) but ongoing work of the Holy Spirit

- ▶ the horsemen/winds are restrained until Christ's Church on earth is mature and prepared to withstand the full terror of God's wrath against the wicked world.
- ▶ can be understood both individually and corporately
- ▶ 144,000 sealed = the Church Militant **NOT AN EXACT NUMBER**
 - ▶ 12 - the whole church (12 patriarchs/12 apostles)
 - ▶ 144 - the dwelling place of God (12 squared/the new Jerusalem [cf 21:9-17])
 - ▶ 1000 - perfection/completeness of periods of time on earth (cf. Psalm 50:10; 2 Pet. 3:8)
 - ▶ the time of the church's mission as Satan is bound
 - ▶ described in ranks, as a military formation

- ▶ The tribes of Israel
 - ▶ Judah (fourth born) listed first - line of the Messiah
 - ▶ Dan excluded - associated with idolatry
 - ▶ Ephraim excluded - in league with Dan (Jdg 17:-1-13)
 - ▶ the cleansed church of Christ, free of apostasy, sealed and ready to stand as faithful witness

- ▶ The countless host
 - ▶ Church Triumphant
 - ▶ White robes - righteousness of Christ; worn by those who remained faithful to Christ
 - ▶ Palm branches - victory
 - ▶ Lev. 23:40
 - ▶ John 12:12-13

▶ Te Deum

- ▶ Next stanza of hymn from chpts 4 and 5
- ▶ Jesus presents the Church to God the Father
- ▶ Sung by the angels around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures

- ▶ Identification of the countless host
 - ▶ An elder, as one who has been redeemed, stands with John when the vision pertains to the redemptive work of Christ (5:5, 7:13)
 - ▶ the great tribulation
 - ▶ may refer to the terrors that will befall the world right before Jesus' returns (Matthew 24)
 - ▶ present participle may also include those coming out of the current tribulations - every tribulation is a foretaste of the great tribulation

- ▶ Life in communion with God
 - ▶ eternally in God's presence worshiping (perfect receiving and perfect thanksgiving) with the elders and the angels and the four winged creatures
 - ▶ now/not yet - soul/body
 - ▶ all the effects of the curse of sin will be lifted
 - ▶ the promise and hope that carry us through our great tribulation