

REVELATION
Understanding the Apocalypse

Radical Word Bible Study

Episode 23

December 18, 2025

RADICALWORD

Rick Lancaster

REVELATION: Understanding the Apocalypse

Revelation 2025

Opening Comments

- **Check Hard Drive capacity.**
- **Switch to PowerPoint (slide 2) once timer reaches zero.**
- Welcome to episode 23 of the Radical Word Bible Study.
- I am Rick Lancaster, and we are coming to you live from our podcasting studio in Murrieta, California at Calvary Chapel French Valley.
- We have a service every Sunday @ 9:30 am.
- We are streaming this Bible Study live on Rumble, Facebook, and YouTube.
- The podcast version of this Bible Study can be found anywhere you go for podcasts.
- It is listed under Radical Word Bible Study with Rick Lancaster wherever you get your podcasts.
- If you are interested in staying up to date with what is happening at The Radical Word, click the link in the description for this video.
- Also, I publish a daily devotional that I send out by email.
- I will include a link to that as well.
- Today is Thursday, December 18, 2025.
- Let's open with a word of prayer.
- **RECORD**
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- Turn to **Revelation 4** as we continue a series: **REVELATION: Understanding the Apocalypse.**

Teaching

- **REVELATION: Understanding the Apocalypse**
- Before we get into the study, we will not be live streaming for the next two Thursdays, December 25th and January 1st.
- We will be back again on Thursday, January 8th.

- Revelation chapter 4 and 5 give us the account of John being summoned up to the throne room of God.
- Last time we discussed how Revelation 4:1 was symbolic of the Rapture of the church.
- If you missed that, go back and listen to Episode 22.
- John is doing his best to describe what he sees.
- One of the complaints that some people have about the book of Revelation is that it has so much symbolism.
- Personally, I love that about the book.
- John is straining with his first century understanding of the world to describe heaven.
- Considering the fact that our twenty-first-century knowledge can't do it, I respect the struggle it must have been for John.
- It conveys the idea that heaven is so far beyond us that we should be thrilled to know that it is far greater than anything humans can imagine.
- We should do our best to interpret the symbols using the Bible as our primary tool for interpretation, but we shouldn't concern ourselves that some symbols are hard to understand.
- This applies to where we find ourselves in chapter four.
- One of the things that fills me with wonder are all the different animals God created.
- Just in birds alone, there are between 11,000 and 20,000 different kinds of birds.
- One of the questions I imagine myself asking God at some point in eternity with God is, why?
- Why are there so many kinds of birds, or fish, or insects?
- God's answer is probably going to be something like, so that you would wonder about it and think about God.
- As I imagine what heaven is going to be like, I think about that.
- If God was so creatively diverse on the earth, how diverse might be His creation in heaven be?
- We get a taste of that here in verse 6.
- **<u>Revelation 4:6b-8a</u>**

- These are supernatural creations of God, angelic beings with natural characteristics that John recognized but don't align with anything we are familiar with in nature.
- The first thing John says about these living creatures is that they are full of eyes in front and back.
- Nature does give us an example of creatures with more than two eyes. **[Spider eyes image]**
- Spiders can have eight, six, four, two, and even no eyes.
- Some see this as symbolic for wisdom, insight, clarity, or knowledge.
- Or it could be just how God decided to create them.
- Even though these creatures had eyes all around, they were not the same.
- **Revelation 4:7**
- I want you to notice something in this description that is important for our interpretation, not just of this verse, but the whole Bible.
- It says, like a lion, like a calf, like a man, and like a flying eagle.
- The Greek word used here is…

Like: homoion - ὅμοιος (*homoios*), οία (*oia*), οιον (*oion*) = similar, like, resembling, i.e., pertaining to being of a same or similar nature or quality.

- Any time you see a description like this, we are being told that the thing being described is, either not describable using normal human language or that the thing is symbolic of something else.
- And remember, every symbol used in the Bible is used to describe something real, either in the natural world or in the spiritual world.
- Our challenge is to try to determine which it is.
- **John Walvoord** says this about these living creatures.

They are a physical embodiment of that which would be otherwise invisible to the natural eye.

- There are many interpretations of what the symbols of these descriptions are trying to tell us.
- For example, one says that the living creatures are depicting characteristics of God.
- The lion is a symbol of majesty, omnipotence, strength, power, and royalty.
- The calf or ox is a symbol of service, patience, humility, and endurance.

- The man is a symbol of rational thought.
- The flying eagle is symbolic of soaring majesty, sovereignty, and supremacy.
- Another interpretation is that these are symbolic of the gospels.
- The lion points to Matthew that is written from the perspective that Jesus is King.
- The calf refers to Mark's gospel which depicts Jesus as a Servant.
- The man can be associated with Luke's gospel which describes the humanity of Christ.
- The flying eagle points to John's gospel that teaches us about the deity of Christ.
- It is not coincidental that the living creatures are listed in the same order as the gospels appear in the Bible.
- Verse eight tells us they each have six wings and are full of eyes.\
- If you have your Bible turn to **Ezekiel 1.**
- This is not the only place creatures like this are described in the Bible.
- There are similar creatures described in **Isaiah 6:1-3**.

1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His *robe* filled the temple. 2 Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy *is* the LORD of hosts; the whole earth *is* full of His glory!"

- These appear to be the same creatures John sees.
- Ezekiel is given a vision and sees something else.
- **<u>Ezekiel 1:4-8</u>**
- These appear to be dramatically different than the ones John and Isaiah saw.
- In my humble opinion, they are different creatures created by Good to do something different than the ones around the throne of God.
- Turn back to **Revelation 4**.
- It is likely that Satan was once like one of these beings or at least similar to them. **Ezekiel 28:14**

14 You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.
15You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.

- The fall of Satan is a mystery to me.

- I believe it happened, but I don't understand how.
- Not only did Satan fall but he took a third of the angels with him.
- So, John sees four living creatures around the throne of God.
- In a similar way to how God created us to worship Him, these beings were also created with a purpose.
- I think we sometimes get distracted by the strange appearance of these creatures.
- That's not the main thing – the important thing is what they were doing, and Who they were doing it for.
- **Revelation 4:8b**
- 'Holy, holy, holy…' – God is perfectly holy.
- "Lord God Almighty" – this is the first of five times that title appears in Revelation – the only five times in the Bible.
- All five times referring to God the Father.
- The description then goes on to say, 'Who was and is and is to come'.
- This is speaking of the eternity of God, who has no beginning and no end.
- This same description was applied to God the Father in **Revelation 1:4.**

4 John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne…

- It is also applied to Christ a few verses later. **Revelation 1:7-8**

7 Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. 8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

- This reminds us that Jesus is equally eternal with God the Father.
- Jesus had no beginning and has no end.
- Next Thursday we will celebrate the birth of Christ.
- Jesus did not begin at His birth or at His conception.
- We can say that the incarnation of Christ began at His conception, but He always existed with the Father before then.
- I am guessing that you all knew that already, but I believe it is important to remind ourselves of these basic truths of our faith as we live in these confusing times.
- The four living creatures do not rest day or night.

- That may teach us something about what heaven is going to be like.
- In our glorified state we will not need to rest or sleep.
- Personally, I love to sleep, even though I usually only do it for about seven hours a night.
- Our human bodies require sleep.
- Not so in heaven.
- The four living creatures never stop crying out 'Holy, holy, holy…'
- It is not a coincidence that John heard them saying that, at that moment.
- God is about to begin to keep His promise to judge the world for rejecting Jesus.
- When it happens, that judgment will be perfectly holy, perfectly right.
- Our human minds are incapable of truly appreciating that. **Isaiah 55:8-9**

8"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. 9"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts."

- In my human mind, I struggle to accept the perfection of God's judgment, so by faith I trust in the perfection of God Himself.
- God is perfect so everything God does is perfect.
- When God judges, He does it as a function of His holiness.
- **Revelation 4:9**
- It appears the four living creatures are saying more than just what is recorded in verse eight.
- They also give glory, honor, and thanks.
- It was that last one that is a curiosity to me.
- What do these four living creatures have to be thankful for?
- It doesn't say, but we can imagine they are thankful for the amazing privilege to be around the throne experiencing the glory of God all the time.
- We can't imagine what that would be like, but I can imagine that I would be thankful if I was there.
- The living creature's proclamation triggers another response.
- **Revelation 4:9-11**
- As I thought about this, it seemed a little odd to me, it always has

- We don't know a lot about what heaven is going to be like, but with the few descriptions we have, we know it is not going to be the 'cherub on a cloud with a harp' version. **[cherub with harp image]**
- These four living creatures give glory to God and then the 24 elders respond in humility and worship.
- But my question is, 'Why are they doing it?'
- Here is why I think they are doing it – it is a spontaneous response to being in the presence of God.
- Maybe this has happened to you – something happens around you, and it is obviously God, He made Himself known through something that happened.
- And in that moment, you sensed the presence of God – in that moment, your heart became full.
- And even before you could think about it, some kind of proclamation came out of you.
- You glorified God spontaneously – I believe that is what is going on here – it is the automatic response of someone whose heart is filled with the presence of God.
- So, the obvious question is why don't we do that more often now?
- We are never separated from the presence of God **1 Corinthians 3:16**

16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

- Turn to **Psalm 63.**
- Our problem is that there is too much of our flesh in the way of sensing God in such a way that we would spontaneously glorify Him more.
- The answer to this problem is learning to tune into God's presence.
- That begins when we choose to desire that.
- **Psalm 63:1-8**
- Choose to make God the greatest desire of your heart.
- Ask God to plant that desire in your heart.
- If that desire is already present, ask God to grow it and make it your greatest desire.
- Let nothing take a higher place of desire, not even your spouse or children.
- God promises to respond to that desire.

- Many of you know and love. **Jeremiah 29:11**

[11]For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

- A couple of verses later. **Jeremiah 29:13**

[13]And you will seek Me and find *Me,* when you search for Me with all your heart.

- What is your heart filled with? Important – Jesus said. **Luke 6:45**

[45]A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

- In heaven, your heart will be perfectly filled with good, and out of your mouth will come praises, and thanks to God.
- What is it filled with now? Examine what is coming out of your mouth and you can tell what is in your heart.
- If you want good to come out of your mouth, fill your heart with good, which you do by seeking and desiring God.
- This is one of the many things only God can do but He will not do it apart from our willingness.
- Something I have said on many occasions is Revelation is about Jesus.
- It is important to note that Jesus always points us to the Father.
- The twenty-four elders sitting around the throne of God declare that He is worthy.
- Another **John Walvoord** quote:

One of the important aims of Revelation is to trace the divine movement of history toward the goal of universal recognition of God.

- God the Father is worthy to receive glory and honor and power…
- It was that last one that caused me to pause and wonder.
- God is all-powerful – what power could He receive.
- It might mean the power exercised in His name and for His glory.
- The twenty-four elders then make a declaration of why God is worthy –'for you created all things'.
- The Bible begins with an account of the creation of all things.
- This is one of the doctrines that is important for unshakable faith.
- Everything that exists does so because God wanted it to and He caused it to come into being.
- Out of nothing came something – everything!
- God's creation was perfect – it was good.

- Tragically, all creation was plunged into sin when our ancient ancestors chose to disobey God.
- Today, the world is suffering because of our sin. **Romans 8:22**

22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

- But someday it will be restored. **Romans 8:20-21**

20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope; 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

- This scene is setting the stage for what is coming next.
- In the throne room of God Almighty.
- He is surrounded by living creatures, elders, and a myriad of others created beings all praising and worshipping Him.
- That is heaven – the heaven we will spend eternity in with Jesus.
- That is the scene in heaven as God prepares to pour out His wrath on the wicked, God-hating, Christ-rejecting world.
- Before we move on to chapter five, I would just like to pause and reflect upon heaven.
- As we get these glimpses into what is going on in heaven we ought to pause and reflect upon our own actions.
- Are we inclined to worship like the four living beasts and the twenty-four elders?
- If not, why not.
- If yes, could we do it better?
- If yes, are we helping others to do it also?
- Just something to think about.
- That brings us to chapter five. I have said before the chapter breaks and verses numbers are useful, but they are not inspired.
- There is no real reason to break the after verse eleven of chapter four.
- John in still in the throne room of almighty God and His attention is on what is going on around the throne.
- In this chapter, we will see the main character of Revelation come onto the scene here in the throne room of God
- His attention is then drawn to the One on the throne.
- **Revelation 5:1**

- John is looking at the throne of God and in the hand of God Almighty is a scroll.
- He can tell that it has writing on both sides.
- At the time John received the Revelation scrolls were commonly used for many this.
- They could be used to communicate – letters and messages.
- They were used to record important things like transactions and legal matters.
- And of course, they were used to record the Scriptures.
- There is a lot of debate about what this scroll is.
- Some suggest it is the title deed to the earth. Maybe!
- When God created man, He gave Adam dominion over the erth and everything on it.
- At the Fall, man lost dominion to Satan.
- That is why Satan could tempt Jesus. **Luke 4:5-7**

5 Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for *this* has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. 7 Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours."

- Jesus didn't deny that Satan had to authority to make that offer.
- Another thought about what is on this scroll are the judgments that are about to befall the world.
- Or it is a record of all the sins that warranted the unrestrained wrath of God to be poured out.
- Maybe list the list of charges against someone in a court of law.
- I lean toward the first thought – this I the title deed to the earth, but I won't be dogmatic about it because we don't have enough information to be certain.
- What we can say is that it is important.
- It is sealed with seven seals.
- Seals indicate who the scroll is from.
- The number seven is used symbolically to indicate wholeness, fullness, or completeness.
- Then John's attention is drawn to something else.
- **Revelation 5:2**
- The first thing I notice about this is the description of the angel.

- ‘strong angel’ – something about this angel made it appear to be mighty, or powerful.
- I always pause and look at phrases like that.
- This is the only place the word strong is used to describe an angel.
- My impression is that all angels are more powerful than the strongest human.
- Whatever this scroll is, it cannot be opened by strength.
- ‘Who is worthy…?’ Only someone who is ‘worthy’ will be able to open it.
- It is interesting that the angel uses the word worthy here.
- It is the same word used in verse 11 of chapter four.
- This infers that only God is worthy to open this scroll.
- **Revelation 5:3**
- ‘no one…able to open the scroll’ – no one strong enough or worthy enough.
- The significance if this is not lost on John.
- **Revelation 5:4**
- We like to imagine heaven as this place where there is no weeping.
- But something about the fact that no one can open this scroll brings the great apostle John to weep.
- This says a lot about what this scroll contains.
- Somehow John knows that this is important, and if it cannot be opened it is bad news for everyone.
- John is not left to wonder about this for long.
- **Revelation 5:5**
- Turn to **Genesis 49**
- The elder, probably one of the twenty-four elders, tells John not to weep, there is hope.
- Directs his attention to someone approaching the throne of God.
- The elder uses two titles that come right out of the Old Testament.
- First one comes out of the blessings that Jacob speaks over his twelve sons.
- This is the only place this title appears.
- The lion speaks of power and royalty – a king.
- **Genesis 49:8-10**

- Turn back to **Revelation 5**
- The Messiah was going to be a descendant of Judah, one of Jacob's sons.
- The next title – Root of David comes out of. **Isaiah 11:1**

There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

- David was from the tribe of Judah, and here the Messiah will come from one of Jesse's children, universally accepted as David.
- Both Mary, the mother of Jesus, and her husband Joseph were descended from King David.
- The elder tells John, not to weep, Jesus has prevailed = conquered – so He is able to take the scroll **Revelation 3:21**

[21]To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

- Jesus overcame when He died on the cross for the sins of the whole world and then was raised to life – defeating sin and death forever.
- So, John turns to see this 'lion'.
- **Revelation 5:6**
- Turn to **John 20**
- After Jesus was resurrected, He appeared to some of the women and to the disciples.
- When Jesus appeared to the disciples, Thomas wasn't there.
- Said he wouldn't believe unless he could touch the print of the nails and stick his hand in his side.
- **John 20:26-27**
- Turn back to **Revelation 5.**
- Jesus in His resurrected, glorified body still bore the marks of His sacrifice for the sin of the world.
- Jesus will forever bear the marks of His sacrificial love for all of us.

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There in the midst of the throne, John sees the only man-made things that will ever enter heaven; the wounds of Christ.

- Every time we look upon Christ in heaven we will be reminded of what He did for us.
- We won't be reminded of our sin, but of His love – His life-giving love.

- Some won't come to Jesus because of their sins, they don't want to be confronted by their sins.
- If you bring your sins to Jesus, He washes them away, and confronts you with His infinite love.
- Other symbols here in verse six – seven horns = complete authority or might – omnipotence.
- Seven eyes = complete insight – omniscience.
- Seven Spirits = Holy Spirit – into all the earth = omnipresence.
- All these are descriptions of God's nature – attributed to the Lamb = Jesus = God.
- **Revelation 5:7**
- Jesus, the Lamb comes and takes the scroll.
- This is a powerful moment.
- By taking the scroll from the hand of the Father, He is making it evident that authority to judge the world is given to Christ.
- And then comes another spontaneous response from those who are around the throne of God.
- **Revelation 5:8**
- All of heaven responds to this simple act of Jesus taking the scroll from the hand of the Father.
- The four living creatures fall down in worship of the Lamb.
- The twenty-four elders also fall down but also have harps and bowls of incense.
- The harps are for praise, usually in a corporate setting.
- Each of the twenty-four elders has a harp which suggests that singing is going to be a significant component of our worship in heaven.
- I would suggest that if we are going to actively singing and praising God with our voices and musical talents, we ought to be doing that while we wait to go to heaven.
- They also have golden bowls of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.
- First, the saints are all Christ-followers.
- This says to me that our prayers are not just filed away somewhere in heaven.
- They are collected in golden bowls.

- Gold is a symbol for value.
- You might not think much about your prayers, but when you pray in faith, you are doing something precious and valuable.
- Jesus is about to answer one of the most commonly uttered prayers. **Matthew 6:9b-10a**

9 …Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come…

- Jesus is about to begin the process of bringing His kingdom to the earth.
- Then the twenty-four elders sing a new song.
- **Revelation 5:9-10**
- I believe this is the song of the raptured church.
- At this point we will be in heaven witnessing the things John is seeing.
- There are a couple of things here in verse 9 I would like to draw your attention to.
- First, in the song they sing – 'You are worthy…'
- At the end of chapter four that is the same thing they said of God the Father sitting on the throne.
- They are attributing to the Lamb the same worthiness as to God the Father = Jesus = God.
- Second, we are given a clue as to who these elders are..
- 'You…have redeemed us to God by your blood'.
- Speaking of Christ Paul said… **Colossians 1:13-14**

13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

- Only the church can sing this song.
- That is why it is described as a new song.
- No one could sing it prior to the church showing up in heaven.
- Third, notice how inclusive this redemption is, 'every tribe, tongue, people, and nation'.
- Christ's sacrifice is sufficient to save every human on the planet.
- The Book of Revelation exists because most will reject Christ's salvation.
- He will come to this world bearing the marks of His sacrifice He made to save them.

- And those marks will judge them for their rejection of the only way to salvation.
- And then a heavenly choir joins in on the worship.
- **Revelation 5:11-12**
- Ten thousand times ten thousand = 100 million.
- Literally = 'myriad myriads' = innumerable multitude.
- Imagine the sound of that choir – awesome.
- I once attended a pastor's conference where about one thousand pastors worshipped God.
- When we sang together, it was a powerful spiritual experience.
- And then something fascinating happens.
- **Revelation 5:13**
- Paul said in Romans 8 that the whole creation groans waiting for its redemption.
- When Jesus takes the scroll from Him who sits upon the throne, almost all of creation responds.
- 'every creature' – what would that be like.
- The church is in heaven – people on the earth are trying to figure out what happened to millions of Christians around the globe.
- And then, without warning, every living creature uses the voice God gave it in an expression of praise and worship of God.
- In heaven John hears 'Blessing and honor and…'
- On earth, it might be dogs howling, birds singing, horses neighing.
- Some say that the scroll is the title deed to the earth and that could very well be true. **Psalm 2:7-8**

7 I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, "You are My Son, Today I have
begotten You. 8 Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth for Your possession."

- Whatever the scroll is, the fact that the Lamb has taken it from the hand of Him who sits on the throne, causes all heavenly and earthly creatures to rejoice and worship God.
- Probably not all earthly creatures will join that heavenly choir.
- Most of humanity, lost in the sin, will be oblivious to what is happening in heaven.
- That should make us sad.

- After the heavenly and earthly choir finish praising God, there is only one thing left to say.
- **Revelation 5:14**
- 'Amen!' = so be it.
- In the next chapter, Jesus will break the seals of the scroll and begin the process of bringing His kingdom to the earth.
- I believe God's word is absolutely true.
- I believe that a day is coming when all who have put their trust in Christ will be caught up to be with Him forever.
- I believe that Christ will someday take the scroll from Him who sits on the throne in heaven.
- I believe that I will be a part of that innumerable choir praising and worshipping the Lamb.
- I believe God gave me a voice for that very purpose.
- And I believe that God doesn't want me to wait until I get to heaven to use my voice to worship the Lamb who takes the scroll.
- And so, I dedicate my voice today to worship Him, and to praise, Him, and to thank Him, and to make Him known.
- What will you do with the voice that God has given you?
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- We will stop here and pick it up next time when we will take a short detour and look at the book of Daniel and the seventy weeks vision he receives.
- **Switch to last PowerPoint slide.**
- **Closing Comments**
- If you have any questions, please connect with me.
- You can email me at rick@radicalword.com.
- You can also connect with me on social media.
- If you are listening to the podcast and would like to tune in to the live stream, you can go to radicalword.com and click on one of the links at the top of the page every Thursday at 6:30pm PST.
- As I said at the beginning, we will not be streaming this study on December 25th or January 1st.

- It is my prayer that you have a very merry Christmas and a blessed and fruitful New Year.
- Let's close with a word of prayer.
- God bless you all. Until next time, go be radical with Jesus.
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- **Stop recording.**
- For those of you watching the live stream, thank you for your participation.
- I will stay online for a few minutes if you have any questions or comments.
- God bless you. Have a merry Christmas.
- I hope to see you at the Christmas Eve service.
- It is at 6:30 pm here at the church.
- If not, have a radical week with Jesus.
- **Switch to Post Stream scene.**