

# Worshipping God 24-4

December 10 – Revelation 4:1-11

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 343 – 22 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

We began the third and final section of the book of *Revelation*, “the things that will take place after these things” (4:1; 1:19). John continued describing his vision in the Spirit (4:2; 1:10), similar to the visions of Isaiah (*Isa. 6:1*), Ezekiel (*Ezek. 1*), and Paul (2 *Cor. 12:2*). The Lord Jesus called to John, saying, “Come up here” (*Rev. 4:1*), and he was privileged to enter heaven through an open door and peak at the throne of God (v.2).

John’s description of what he saw and heard is stunning. He could not discern details of God’s figure or face, but he said His appearance was like jasper, a brilliant clear stone that emits various colors (like crystal), which explains why John saw “a rainbow around the throne” (v.3; *Ezek. 1:28*). All the colors were wrapped with an emerald (green) appearance. Out from the throne came “flashes of lightning and peals of thunder” (*Rev. 4:5*). Simply put, God’s throne is breath-taking, too marvelous for words.

Next, John described what surrounded the throne of God (v.4-7). Standing in front of His throne were seven lamps of fire symbolizing the seven-fold (complete) Spirit of God (see 1:4). The Spirit of God is portrayed in flames of fire throughout Scripture (i.e., the burning bush that spoke to Moses, the tongues of fire that appeared at Pentecost). The lamps stood on the floor of the throne room, which looked like a sea of glass, clear like crystal (*Rev. 4:6*).

Also, around God’s throne, there were other beings. First, there were four living creatures that John described like angels, each having a different likeness, like that of a lion, calf, man, and eagle (v.6-8). These creatures are possibly the cherubim that appear in other places of Scripture (*Ezek. 1; 10; Isa. 6; Heb. 9:5*).

Second, there were twenty-four smaller thrones that surrounded the throne of God (*Rev. 4:4*). On these thrones were sitting twenty-four

elders, clothed in white, with crowns on their head. While we don’t know their exact identity, they appear to represent the Church, redeemed and rewarded saints from all eras.

Why 24 elders? We don’t know for sure. The number 24 in Scripture is a symbol of the Levitical priests, whose duty it was to steward all the pieces and practices of the tabernacle. Once a permanent temple in Jerusalem replaced the mobile tabernacle, the priests’ duties were revised. The Levitical families were organized into 24 divisions and assigned a respective time to serve in the temple (1 *Chron. 23, 24*).

## Daily Reflection

What’s the point of this scene in heaven? We must remember that the earthly tabernacle and temple were shadowy copies of heaven. **The Levitical priests were expected to praise God, day and night, and offer sacrifices of thanks year-round** (1 *Chron. 23:30-32*). How fitting it is, then, for John to see the same thing in heaven. The four living creatures “do not cease to say, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty...,’” and the twenty-four elders fall on their faces and cast their crowns before the throne in worship to God (*Rev. 4:8-11*).

**God is worshiped in heaven 24-4, by 24 elders and 4 living creatures. We, too, are to worship God 24-4, night and day for 24 hours, and all year round (four seasons).**

Those in heaven worship the Lord, saying, “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will (good pleasure), they (we) exist...” (v.11)

“The heavens declare the glory of God... Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals His knowledge” (*Ps. 19:1-4*). **Everything God has made praises Him and brings glory to His name. Let us do the same.** For if we don’t, “even the stones will cry out” (*Lk. 19:40*).

# The Lion and the Lamb

December 11 – Revelation 5:1-14

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Day 344 – 21 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

We continued John's vision of heaven. Previously, he had observed an amazing time of worship around the throne of God (4:1-11). That scene grew quiet when the One who sat on the throne revealed a book, or scroll, sealed up with seven seals (5:1). The scroll contained a series of judgments that must occur on the earth before the Lord can set up His kingdom.

All fell silent when an angel asked a question, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals" (v.2)? At first, no one stepped forward, which burdened John greatly (v.3, 4). But then, one of the elders assured him that there was One who is worthy to open the book. He said, "The Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome..." (v.5). **Though John expected to see a Lion standing before the throne, there was a Lamb.** The bloody Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which represented the Holy Spirit (v.6).

**Who was this Lamb that was called a Lion? It was Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah.** The symbol for the tribe of Judah was a lion (*Gen. 49:8-10*), and Jesus was a descendant of Judah through the lineage of David. It was to David's family, of course, that God promised to give the rule over Israel forever (*Gen. 49:10; 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Isa. 11:1-10*). Thus, Jesus is called the Root of David (*Rev. 5:5; Isa. 11:1*). Also, note the trinitarian presence of God — the Father on the throne, the Lamb as the Son, and the horns and eyes as the Spirit.

What is the significance of the Lion and the Lamb, and why was He the only one worthy to open the scroll? **The Lion and the Lamb represent two aspects of Christ's role as the Messiah.** During His first advent on earth, His role was the Lamb of God, who came to take away the sins of the world (*Jn. 1:29*). At His second coming, Jesus will be the Lion. He will conquer His enemies, judge them, and establish an everlasting kingdom.

**Thus, Jesus — the Lion and the Lamb — is the only one eligible to open the scroll and execute judgment.** Why? The elder told John, "The Lion has overcome..." (*Rev. 5:5*). Christ overcame sin at the cross, and He overcame death at the empty tomb. No one else has achieved what He has, which is why He was able to "take the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne" (v.7). He alone has the authority to execute judgment (*Jn. 5:22, 27; Matt. 28:18*).

When Jesus the Son presented Himself before the throne and took the scroll from the Father, another time of worship unfolded (*Rev. 5:8-14*). The four living creatures and the 24 elders bowed down and sang a new song (v.8-10). Joining their chorus were myriads of angels, all singing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain" (v.9, 12). Because of what Christ had done — purchased the Church by His blood — "every knee bowed down, and every tongue confessed that He is Lord" (*Phil. 2:10, 11*).

## Daily Reflection

Remember, the elders before the throne collectively represent the redeemed saints of the Church (i.e., white garments, golden crowns). Notice that in John's vision today, they also had harps and bowls of incense (*Rev. 5:8*). Throughout Scripture, the burning of incense has represented prayer. How fitting it is that, through the harps and the bowls, our praises and our prayers are ever before the throne of God. Because of the Lamb that was slain, the One who sits on the throne hears us.

**Christ — the Lion and the Lamb — is not only worthy to open the scroll, but He is also worthy of your praise and worship.** Yes, you will live in His kingdom under His dominion forever one day, but you can give Him glory and honor by your words and actions today. Have you recognized the Lion and the Lamb as worthy in your life? Because He has overcome, so have you. Let Him know how grateful you are and sing that new song today.

# The Six Seals

December 12 – Revelation 6:1-17

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Day 345 – 20 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Jesus — the Lion and the Lamb — broke the six seals of the great scroll (5:1, 7). Each seal unleashed a measure of God's judgment on the tarnished earth and its sinful inhabitants. The first five seals lead up to the great and terrible Day of the Lord (*Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14*).

**The first four seals released the infamous four horsemen, who represent four man-made actions that God uses to bring about judgment.**

The first rider sits on a white horse (*Rev. 6:1, 2*). White is the symbol of peace (i.e., white flag, white dove). But this peace is deceiving. It is a peace forged through manipulation and intimidation. Note that the rider has a bow. He's a conqueror. He also has a crown, meaning he has authority. During this period, the nations of the world will be conquered through "peaceful" measures to forge a united global government.

The second rider sits on a red horse (*v.3, 4*). Red is the symbol of war (color of blood). Notice that he doesn't make peace, but rather "he takes peace from the earth" (*v.4*). That "peace" was the coerced union between the world's nations. The rider also had a great sword and the ability to cause people to kill each other. The previous "peace" dissolves into global conflict and results in record casualties.

The third rider sits on a black horse (*v.5, 6*). Black represents the hopelessness of famine. Because of the war, food has been destroyed and is now in short supply. What little food exists is expensive. Thus, the rider has a pair of scales in his hands to measure the cost of food. Because of its scarcity, it is quite valuable and difficult to acquire. The result is death.

The fourth rider sits on a grey horse (*v.7, 8*). Grey or ashen colors are lifeless and pale. That's because the rider is Death. He has the authority to snuff out 25% of the world's population. That's why Hades follows this horseman. He ushers these souls to the place of the dead.

The fifth seal reveals a host of saints (Christians) who have been martyred for their faith (*v.9-11*). They cry out to God, "How much longer before You avenge our blood?" He tells them that it will be a little while longer, until the fixed number of killed is completed (*v.11*).

**So far, the first five seals are man-made actions that have terrible consequences. God uses them to judge mankind for its sin and rebelliousness. On the sixth seal, God intervenes and acts.**

Finally, the sixth seal unleashes a global terror — earthquakes that split the planet (and cause volcanos, no doubt), the sun is blacked out, the moon is reddened, and the stars (or meteors) fall to the earth (*v.12-17*). Every person that remains on the earth, rich and poor, powerful or not, hides in caves "to escape the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand" (*v.16, 17*)?

## Daily Reflection

Here are four takeaways from the six seals. First, judgment is coming (*Mal. 4:5*). God has promised that it will happen, so it is inevitable, just a matter of time. Second, those who have rebelled against God and embraced a sinful, immoral lifestyle will face the wrath of Almighty God; and it will be so dreadful that they will hide in caves to escape His judgments.

Third, there is no place on earth to escape God or His wrath. The only way to be saved from the wrath of God for sin is by faith in His Son, who paid the penalty for sin at the cross. There is salvation in no one else (*Acts 4:12*). Finally, those who are persecuted or killed for following Christ have a special place in heaven, near the Lord (*Rev. 6:9*). Furthermore, their blood will be avenged, rest assured. While martyrdom is blessed by God, He does not take it lightly. Justice will be done.

Reading such things should make you thankful that you are on the Lord's side. Are you?

# A Great Multitude

December 13 – Revelation 7:1-17

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 346 – 19 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

After the six seals unleash the beginning of God's judgment of the earth and its inhabitants (6:1-17), there is a brief pause before the seventh seal is broken (8:1-13). During that pause, John observes two important groups of people. Let's look at the identity, origin, and purpose of these groups.

Before John identifies these groups, he sees four angels holding back the winds (7:1), briefly preventing a great storm (8:7). Why the pause? Another angel tells John, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bondservants of our God..." (7:3). A seal, or mark, is an indication that one belongs to another and is protected from harm (*Ezek. 9:3, 4*). **God knows His followers and protects them from His judgments.**

Who are the people sealed, or marked, by God? The first group is comprised of 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from the twelve tribes (7:4-8). However, two of the historic tribes are missing — Dan and Ephraim — for reasons we do not know. They are replaced by the tribes of Joseph and Levi (v.7, 8). Though the Jews reject Christ today, there will be a time when they will return to God and believe in His Messiah for salvation (*Zech. 12:10; Rom. 11:25-27*).

The second group of God's servants are **"a great multitude which no one can count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and languages..."** (7:9). One of the elders tells John that they are "the ones who come out of the great tribulation..." (v.14). Though there is no problem identifying this great multitude, there is a problem with the timing of their rescue. Why? There are multiple interpretations of the great tribulation and timing of the rapture.

First, there are those who believe the events of *Revelation*, including the great tribulation, have already occurred. Second, there are those who believe that the events of *Revelation* are

happening now, and we are in the midst of the great tribulation. Third, there are those who believe that the events of *Revelation*, including the great tribulation, will occur in the future. Fourth, among those who believe that these events will occur in the future, there is disagreement about when Christ will rapture His Church, either before, during, or after the great tribulation. With such uncertainty, it is wise not to claim with certainty when this group is saved.

## Daily Reflection

Whatever one's view of the rapture and the great tribulation, there are several noteworthy truths from this passage. First, God saves people from their sin (including Jews) up to the very end. Second, God keeps His promises to Israel. While we may not know the timing, we can be assured that God will do what He says.

Third, **God knows those who are His.** He knows exactly how many Jews will be saved; and although John could not count the great multitude, God knows the exact number. We are all sealed by His mark. We belong to Him, and He will rescue us in His timing.

Notice how John describes the great multitude. They are before the Lamb (v.9). They are clothed in white, made clean by the Lamb's blood (v.9, 14). They are celebrating with palm branches and praising God (v.9, 10). Everyone joins them in worship (v.11, 12). They serve Him night and day in the temple — heaven (v.15). God spreads His tabernacle over them, meaning they are secure forever (v.15). They will never be hungry or thirsty (v.16). They are not outside under the elements (v.17). They are guided by the Great Shepherd (Jesus) who leads them to the water of life (eternal life, 17); and they never cry again (v.17). Wow!

**This great multitude must be special to inherit such gifts from God. They are a people of His own possession, who have much for which to be thankful** (*1 Pet. 2:9; Eph. 1:14*).

# The Four Trumpets

December 14 – Revelation 8:1-13

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 347 – 18 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

The seventh seal of the scroll was broken (8:1). This seal consisted of seven trumpet judgments. **Today, we read about four of the judgments, which destroy a third of creation.** The trumpet judgments are much worse than the previous seal judgments (6:1-17). God destroys the old heaven and earth before Jesus returns and makes all things new.

Before the trumpets are blown, there is a brief pause when nothing is said (8:1). During that time, preparations are made for the next phase of judgments. For example, seven angels stand before God and to each is given a trumpet (v.2). Also, another angel with a censer (a container suspended from a rope or chain that carried embers for burning incense) fills up the altar which was before the throne (v.3). In Scripture, incense is a picture of prayer. The smoke of the incense rising to God's throne is a symbol of how our prayers are continually before Him (v.4). Finally, before the first trumpet is blown, the angel with the censer throws it down to earth, signifying the end of the pause and the beginning of the trumpet judgments (v.5, 6).

**When the first trumpet is blown, hail and fire mixed with blood fall to the ground** (v.7). The result is catastrophic damage to the earth, as a third of it is burned up. This judgment reminds us of the Egyptian plague of fire and hail right before the exodus (Ex. 9:13-25).

**When the second trumpet is blown, a great mountain burning with fire (like a volcano) is thrown into the sea** (Rev. 8:8). The result is catastrophic damage to the ocean, as a third of it becomes blood, destroying sea life. The resulting tsunami (tidal wave) also wrecks a third of the ships in the ocean (v.9). This judgment reminds us of the Egyptian plague of blood in the Nile River (Ex. 7:14-24).

**When the third trumpet is blown, a great burning star (like a meteor or asteroid) falls from space** (Rev. 8:10). The result is catastrophic damage to our fresh water sources, as a third of the water becomes bitter and poisonous (v.11). This judgment reminds us of the bitter water the Israelites drank at Mara during the exodus (Ex. 15:23-25).

**When the fourth trumpet is blown, the sun, moon, and stars are struck and do not shine** (Rev. 8:12). Without the great celestial light sources, the earth is dark both night and day. This judgment reminds us of the Egyptian plague of darkness (Ex. 10:21-23).

As bad as these four trumpet judgments are, they are nothing compared to the next three. In fact, John sees an eagle that declares with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe for those who dwell on the earth because of the remaining blasts..." (Rev. 8:13). While the first four trumpet judgments struck the earth, the last three trumpet judgments strike the people of the earth. Simply put, the worse is yet to come.

## Daily Reflection

As I read about the four trumpet judgments, I was reminded of two important truths. **First, the world in which we live will be destroyed.**

Remember what John wrote? "Do not love the world nor the things in the world... for the world is passing away and also its lusts" (1 Jn. 2:15, 17). **Second, this world is not our home. We are destined to live in a better world, for eternity.** Those in God's tabernacle (heaven) are safe from the atrocities that are occurring on earth during His judgment (Rev. 7).

What about you? Do you have unhealthy love for this world or the things of this world? How would you compare your love for this world to your love for the next? Consider how you spend your time, talents, and treasure. Are they spent on this world or the next? To which world are you clinging for purpose and security?

# Scorpions and Snakes

December 15 – Revelation 9:1-21

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Day 348 – 17 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

After four of the seven trumpets are blown (8:1-12), and the earth is severely damaged, John sees an eagle that cries out, “Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth because of the remaining blasts...” (v.13). In other words, **the last three trumpet judgments are worse than the previous four, and they are aimed directly at the godless people of the earth.** Today, the fifth and six trumpets are blown and, just as it was foretold, the result is an appalling number of deaths (9:1-21).

When John hears the fifth trumpet blow, he sees “a star fall from heaven,” which is perhaps Satan or one of his demons (notice John refers to the star as *him*, 9:1). This star is probably the same being as the king of the abyss, who is called Abaddon or Apollyon, meaning Destroyer (v.11). Right away, we know that this vision is spiritual in nature, not physical.

The star, who is given a key, opens an abyss or bottomless pit, which releases a great cloud of smoke, and out of the smoke descends a horde of frightening demons (v.2, 3). John has difficulty describing their hideous appearance (v.7-10). These demons may be the same fallen angels mentioned in the letters of Peter and Jude. They have been kept in a pit of darkness since *Genesis 6*, locked up until “the judgment of the great day” (2 *Pet.* 2:4; *Jude* 1:6).

The assignment given to these demons, who “had the power of scorpions in their tail,” is to torture people for five months (*Rev.* 9:3, 5, 10). However, they are not allowed to kill anyone. While a scorpion bite may not kill you, it is incredibly painful. The people of earth are tormented by these demons, to the point that they want to die but can’t. Their pain is like that of the demon-possessed man Jesus encountered in Gerasene (*Mk.* 5:1-5). He screamed day and night, because of his tormentors, and scraped himself with rocks to deal with the agony. Simply put, this is intense suffering.

When John hears the sixth trumpet, he saw four angels released in the Middle East (*Rev.* 9:13-15). These angels lead an army of 200 million to destroy one third of the population with three plagues — fire, smoke, and brimstone (v.16, 18). Again, John has difficulty describing their appearance (v.17, 19). While these forces are deadly (like snakes), slaying billions of people, it is unclear what they represent — demons, human armies, diseases, terrorists, weapons, plagues, or some other unknown horrors.

What’s amazing is that those who are unaffected by these plagues (even though they surely lose loved ones) are not phased regarding their sin. They “did not repent of the works of their hands” (v.20, 21); rather they continued their evil ways.

## Daily Reflection

There are three points to note in our passage. **First, though these judgments seem chaotic, God is in control.** He gave the key to the angel to open the pit (v.1). He gave the demons instructions regarding who they could punish (v.4); and He restrained the demons from killing anyone (v.5). God is sovereign over all.

Second, **God protects those who are His.** The Lord did not allow anyone who had His seal on their heads to be harmed (v.4). Then, there is the mysterious voice from the golden altar (v.13). Could that judgment be related to the oppressed people mentioned earlier, huddled beneath the altar (6:9-11)? Perhaps, the army in the sixth trumpet judgment is the fulfillment of God’s promise to avenge His people.

Finally, **Satan’s forces destroy the godless.** Ironically, the very people who worship the devil, and who indulge in the sinful pleasures of his warped world system, are led to their demise. Why? Doesn’t Satan care for his own? Not at all. In fact, he wants to destroy anyone who bears the image of God, even those foolish enough to serve him.

# The Little Book

December 16 – Revelation 10:1-11

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 349 – 16 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Just as there is a brief pause between the sixth and seventh seal judgments (7:1-17), there is a pause between the sixth and seventh trumpet judgments (10:1-11). During this interlude, John sees “a strong angel coming down out of heaven” (10:1). He straddles the land and the sea and carries a little book or scroll (v.2, 3). Then, the angel cries out like a lion, and seven peals of thunder respond (v.3). This vision is similar to those of the prophets Daniel (Dan. 10:5, 6) and Ezekiel (Ezek. 2:1-3:11).

Evidently, John understands the message concealed in the thunder, for he is about to write down his translation, but a voice from heaven tells him not to write anything down (Rev. 10:4). Then, the angel straddling the land and sea raises his right hand and takes an oath, by the Creator of heaven and earth, that they delay is about to end (v.5, 6). All the mysteries of the end times are about to be revealed. All the prophecies of the Old Testament are about to be fulfilled (v.7).

After the oath, **John is told to take the little book from the angel and eat it** (v.9). The angels says, “It will taste like honey in your mouth, but in your stomach it will be bitter” (v.9). John does as he is commanded and eats the book. Indeed, it was like honey in his mouth, but it made him sick to his stomach (v.10). Finally, the voices tell John to prophesy again, meaning to continue writing down his visions.

But what is in the little book, why does he eat it, and why does it make him sick? **The little book is a symbol of God’s Word.** By giving it to John and asking him to eat it is God’s way of communicating to John the message He wants shared with others. In the context, the little book probably contains the judgments to come, the return of Christ, and the end of the story. The words probably make John sick because God’s final judgments are hard to stomach and even harder to convey.

## Daily Reflection

While this chapter is short, I love the imagery, especially that of eating the little book. Though this concept may be new to you, it is repeated throughout Scripture. Take a minute to read the following passages and write your summary.

*Ezekiel 3:1-4*

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*Jeremiah 15:16*

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*Psalms 19:9, 10; 119:103*

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*Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4*

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*Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:1-3*

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