

## **Thrones in the Book of Revelation**

### **Part 2: The Lamb on the Throne**

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In the last two decades considerable scholarly interest has been shown in the Christology of the book of Revelation. The studies devoted significant attention to the specific titles applied to Jesus in the book, although it was recognized at the same time that a purely titular approach provides only limited information in illuminating the topic.<sup>1</sup> With good reason, then, Revelation's Christology was contextualized within the framework of other questions.<sup>2</sup> Still, fundamental to any Christological investigation is the title ἀρνίον as the leading Christological expression of the book.<sup>3</sup> The term occurs twenty-nine times in Revelation, twenty-eight of which are applied to Christ. Significantly, the Lamb is portrayed in three

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<sup>1</sup> For representative studies which discuss the Christological titles in Revelation, see e.g. Joseph Comblin, *Le Christ dans l'Apocalypse* (Bibliothèque de Théologie 3/6; Paris: Desclée, 1965); Traugott Holtz, *Die Christologie der Apokalypse des Johannes* (TUGAL, 85; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1971), 5-26; Ulrich B. Müller, *Messias und Menschensohn in jüdischen Apokalypsen und in der Offenbarung des Johannes* (SNT, 6; Gütersloh: Mohn, 1972); D.E. Lohse, "Wie christlich ist die Offenbarung des Johannes?," *NTS* 34 (1998), 321-38.

<sup>2</sup> The literature on the Christology of Revelation is immense. For the survey of scholarship, see e.g. Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (WUNT, 2/70; Tübingen: Mohr, 1995), 22-41; Matthias Reinhard Hoffmann, *The Destroyer and the Lamb: The Relationship Between Angelomorphic and Lamb Christology in the Book of Revelation* (WUNT, 2/203; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 6-18.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Donald Guthrie ("The Lamb in the Structure of the Book of Revelation," *VE* 12 [1981], 64-71[64]) states: "Since it is so dominant the title Lamb must provide an important clue for determining the purpose and meaning of the whole book."

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contexts within the visionary part of the book (4:1-22:5) as related to throne. The nature of this relation has been vigorously debated, since different expressions are employed for its designation: ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου in 5:6, ἀνά μέσον τοῦ θρόνου in 7:17 and ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου/ὁ θρόνος in 22:1, 3. This study will examine exegetically these three throne references, while the only additional relevant reference (3:21) will be discussed in the third article in this series on the thrones in Revelation, since it designates also human occupants of the throne.

### 1. Drama in the Heavenly Throne Room (5:1-14)

Rev. 5 is the most important Christological chapter in the book of Revelation. In this vision the Lamb steps into the scene of Revelation's drama as a major actor holding in his hands the solution for the cosmic problem. The emphasis on the centrality of the heavenly throne from the first scene of the throne-room vision (ch. 4) continues in ch. 5 indicated by the five θρόνος references of the chapter. The term appears once at the beginning (5:1), twice at the end (5:11, 13) and twice in the heart of the vision (5:6, 7).

#### 1.1. Contextual and Structural Considerations

Rev. 5 is closely connected to ch. 4 as an uninterrupted continuation of the same throne room vision.<sup>4</sup> However, there is a significant shift of attention between the two scenes. Whereas the focus of ch. 4 is the heavenly throne, ch. 5 introduces two new motifs with detailed attention: the sealed scroll (βιβλίον; 5:1) and the Lamb (ἀρνίον; 5:5-6). Since these motifs have major roles in the unfolding chapters, the primary function of ch. 5 is to introduce them and set them on the stage of Revelation's drama. It has been suggested by Müller that the shift of attention causes the centrality of the throne to be lost in ch. 5.<sup>5</sup> However, this suggestion is vulnerable on several grounds. First, both the sealed book and the Lamb are portrayed as related

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<sup>4</sup> For the verbal, thematic and structural parallels between Rev. 4 and 5, see Laszlo Gallusz, *The Throne Motif in the Book of Revelation* (Ph.D. Dissertation; Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, 2011), 153.

<sup>5</sup> Ekkehardt Müller, *Microstructural Analysis of Revelation 4-11* (AUSDDS, 21; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1996), 214. Ranko Stefanovic (*The Background and Meaning of the Sealed Book of Revelation 5* [AUSDDS, 22; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1996], 213) is more cautious claiming that the centrality of the throne is lost only at the beginning of Rev. 5, while it is emphasized again in the second half of the chapter (5:11, 13).

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to the throne (5:1, 6). Second, the central scene of the chapter is the taking of the scroll by the Lamb, which necessitates approaching the divine throne and its occupant (5:7). Third, the repeated reference to θρόνος in five out of fourteen verses spread throughout the entire chapter points to the significance of the motif (5:1, 6, 7, 11, 13). Fourth, the status that the Lamb receives in ch. 5 becomes intelligible only in relation to the divine throne. On the basis of the evidence set out here it can be concluded that the Lamb with the sealed book appears as the narrative focus of ch. 5; however, the centrality of the throne remains unchallenged by the events occurring around it and the reactions following them.

The literary structure of ch. 5 is framed and punctuated by the *καὶ εἶδον* formula and the less frequent longer version *καὶ εἶδον καὶ ἤκουσα*. Aune notes that this formula functions in two ways in Revelation: it either introduces a major break in the narration or marks a change in the focus of the vision.<sup>6</sup> On the basis of this structuring device the chapter can be divided into three units: the first focuses on the drama of the sealed scroll (5:1-5), the second presents the solution to the cosmic problem in the person and accomplishment of the Lamb (5:6-10) and the third describes the universal reaction to the solution (5:11-14). References to the heavenly throne occur at the beginning of the second (5:6) and the third sections (5:11), while the well-known circumlocution formula a “the One sitting on the throne” appears in all three sections (5:1, 7, 13).

### 1.2. Background

There is a close continuity between the basic background of Rev. 4 and 5 that is rooted in cultic and political imagery. The attention in the following discussion will be only on new aspects emerging from ch. 5.

#### 1.2.1. Cultic Symbolism

The most significant new cultic aspect of the vision is the Lamb imagery. While this imagery is of “multivalent character,”<sup>7</sup> it recalls primarily the paschal lamb of the Old Testament.<sup>8</sup> The sacrificial role is

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<sup>6</sup> David E. Aune, *Revelation* (3 vols.; WBC, 52A-C; Dallas, TX: Word, 1997-98), I, 329.

<sup>7</sup> Mitchell G. Reddish, “Martyr Christology in the Apocalypse,” *JSNT* 33 (1988), 85-95 (88).

<sup>8</sup> The interpretation of Christ’s crucifixion as a paschal sacrifice is well known in the New Testament and the early Christian literature (1Cor. 5:7; 1Pet. 1:19; Heb. 9:14; Col. 2:14; John 19:33, 36; Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 111.3). The connection is especially clear in the

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emphasized at the first place within the introductory description of the Lamb figure which characterizes him as ὡς ἐσφαγμένον (5:6). The same quality is repeated twice more in the chapter in the first two hymns directed to the Lamb (5:9, 12). The term σφάζω means “to slaughter, either animals or persons; in contexts referring to persons, the implication is of violence and mercilessness.”<sup>9</sup> Michel notes that in spite of the non-biblical use of the term for ritual slaying, σφάζω is in LXX hardly a technical term for sacrificial ritual, but rather a profane expression.<sup>10</sup> However, in a number of cases it appears as the translation of טָבַח or שָׁחַט which designate animal or even human sacrifices.<sup>11</sup> The perfect passive participle ἐσφαγμένον indicates an abiding condition as the result of a past act of slaying. The sacrificial aspect is further supported by the cultic reference to the Lamb’s blood as a ransom for people purchased for God (5:9). Thus, Jörns rightly notes that in the Lamb symbolism of Rev. 5 we have a cultic typology.<sup>12</sup> The particle ὡς in front of ἐσφαγμένον in 5:6 is also significant in this regard. Corresponding to the Hebrew כּ it introduces the Christological interpretation of the Lamb imagery in the form of visionary language.

In 5:8 further cultic aspects are introduced. The singing elders hold in their hands cultic instruments (κιθάρα; “lyre”) and cultic utensils (φιάλη; “bowl”). κιθάρα as a rendering of כִּנּוּר in LXX is of central significance among the instruments mentioned in the Old Testament. Although it was

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Fourth Gospel in which Christ is designated as “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29; cf. 1:36). However, the expression is most likely pre-Johannine (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* [Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1985], 96). Rudolf Schnackenburg (*Die Johannesbriefe* [HTKNT, 13/2; Freiburg: Herder, 5th edn, 1975], 37) notes the same emphasis on the expiatory function of Christ in 1Jn 1:7, 9; 2:1-2; 3:5; 4:10. The typological nature of the paschal symbolism in regard to Revelation’s Lamb is widely recognized: just as the blood of the paschal lamb functioned as the crucial motif of salvation in historical exodus event, similarly the death and resurrection of Christ is the basis of the hope of the eschatological people of God in the last book of the New Testament. For this aspect of Revelation’s symbolism, see e.g. Holtz, *Christologie*, 44-47; Hoffmann, *Destroyer and the Lamb*, 117-19.

<sup>9</sup> LN §20.72.

<sup>10</sup> O. Michel, “σφάζω” in *TDNT*, VII, 925-38(930).

<sup>11</sup> For animal sacrifices in cultic rituals, see: Lev. 1:5, 11; 3:2, 8, 13; 4:5, 15, 24, 29, 33, 6:18; 7:2; 14:5, 13; 1Sam. 1:25; Ezek. 44:11. For human sacrifices to Yahweh, see Gen. 22:10; 1Sam. 15:33. For human sacrifices to pagan gods, see Ezek. 16:17-21; 23:39; Isa. 57:5.

<sup>12</sup> Klaus-Peter Jörns, *Das hymnische Evangelium: Untersuchungen zu Aufbau, Funktion und Herkunft der hymnischen Stücke in der Johannesoffenbarung* (SNT, 5; Gütersloh: Mohn, 1971), 50.

used on a wide variety of occasions,<sup>13</sup> its role in the temple context in psalm-singing, liturgical praise and worship was particularly esteemed.<sup>14</sup> Görg notes that כנור music is a fitting symbol of rejoicing, therefore its appearance in the heavenly praise scene is very appropriate.<sup>15</sup> φιάλη, the other cultic object in the hands of the elders in 5:8, designates a libation utensil used in a liturgical setting.<sup>16</sup> Since LXX renders it always as a translation of מזרק, it becomes a technical term for “bowl used in offering.”<sup>17</sup> These bowls are pictured as filled with incense (γεμούσας θυμιαμάτων), a further cultic aspect which designates the prayers of the saints. The idea of priesthood is part of the cultic picture of ch. 5, since the twenty-four elders are portrayed as acting in a priestly role. Also, the priestly function is directly stated as an effect of the Lamb’s salvific work and is portrayed in terms of making people kingdom and priests (ἐποίησας αὐτοὺς ... βασιλείαν καὶ ἱερεῖς).<sup>18</sup>

### 1.2.2. Political Symbolism

The parallels of Rev. 4 with the Roman imperial imagery continue in ch. 5 with some new elements. It has been suggested by Aune on the basis of artistic sources that the opening scene portraying “the One sitting on the throne” with the sealed βιβλίον in his right hand (5:1) is reminiscent of the depiction of a princeps surrounded by his council and holding a *libellus*, a petition letter in the form of an open scroll.<sup>19</sup> More convincing, however, are the parallels between the acclamations addressed to the emperor and the

<sup>13</sup> Besides the cultic context כנור occurs on numerous other occasions. It provided music during secular celebrations (Gen. 31:27; Isa. 24:8) and in times of lament or mourning (Job 30:31). However, it could be used by prostitutes and the wicked (Job 21:12; Isa. 23:16), but also in connection with miraculous healings (1Sam. 16:16, 23) and prophetic ecstasies (1Sam. 10:5) (Joachim Braun, *Music in Ancient Israel/Palestine: Archaeological, Written, and Comparative Sources* [trans. D.W. Stott; The Bible in its World; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002], 16-19).

<sup>14</sup> 2Sam. 6:5; 1Chron. 15:16; Ps. 43:4; 57:7-9; 71:22; 81:1-3; 92:1-3; 98:4-6; 108:1-3; 147:7; 149:3; 150:3.

<sup>15</sup> M. Görg, “כנור” in *TDOT*, VII, 197-203(203).

<sup>16</sup> Exod. 27:3; 38:3; Num. 4:14; 1Kgs 7:40f.

<sup>17</sup> *BAGD*, 858. See e.g. Exod. 38:23; Num. 4:14; 2Kgs 12:14; 25:15; 1Chron. 28:17; 2Chron. 4:8; Neh. 7:70.

<sup>18</sup> The idea of the kingly–priestly role of God’s people in Rev. 5:10 is an allusion to Exod. 19:6, a text with a well-known cultic significance.

<sup>19</sup> David E. Aune, “The Influence of Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial on the Apocalypse of John,” *BR* 38 (1983), 5-26(9).

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Lamb in 5:9-14. The emphasis on *consensus omnium*, a universal consent, is of a particular significance in this regard. Though Aune acknowledges that little is known about this idea, it is clear that *consensus omnium* is considered of fundamental importance for the legitimacy of the empire and establishing of the principate's authority.<sup>20</sup> The liturgical material of Revelation, including the three hymns of ch. 5 (vs. 9-10, 12, 13), reveals close parallels with this Roman idea. Aune convincingly argues that this literary feature reveals a polemical intention on part of the author:

During the late first century, when the *argumentum e consensu omnium* had become particularly important in imperial propaganda, it is striking that the Apocalyptist should emphasize both the social breadth as well as the numerical strength of those who celebrate the sovereignty and power of both God and the Lamb. Indeed, those who proclaim the eternal kingship of God and the Lamb are more numerous and more representative than those who are depicted as participating in the rituals of imperial *accessio* and *adventus*.<sup>21</sup>

The significance of the imperial background in the interpretation of Revelation's concept of ἄξιος has been often noted (5:2, 4, 9).<sup>22</sup> Since the term has no great importance in the LXX and Jewish literature, viewing the concept primarily against the Graeco-Roman background is even more justified. The term appears in the Graeco-Roman context around the turn of the era as a distinctive qualification for a person worthy of a high position and honour. The significance of merit as the reason for holding of an office

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<sup>20</sup> The principate of Augustus was founded on the basis of agreement of three powerful groups: the senate, the equestrians and the people. Therefore, the emphasis on the universal consensus became one of the fundamental governing principles of the empire as expressed by the often repeated formula of Augustus in the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* 34: "per consensum universorum potitus rerum omnium" ("by universal consent taking control of all things"). For textual and numismatic evidence on the *consensus omnium*, see Aune, "Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial," 16-20; Klaus Oehler, "Der consensus omnium als Kriterium der Wahrheit in der antiken Philosophie und der Patristik," *Antike und Abendland* 10 (1961), 103-29.

<sup>21</sup> Aune, "Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial," 20.

<sup>22</sup> E.g. Erik Peterson, *Heis theos: epigraphische, formgeschichtliche und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (FRLANT, 41; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1926), 176-79; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World* (Proclamation Commentaries; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), 59; J. Daryl Charles, "Imperial Pretensions and the Throne-Vision of the Lamb: Observations on the Function of Revelation 5," *CTR* 7 (1993), 85-97; Stefanovic, *Sealed Book*, 167-81.

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of influence is well attested. It was even a major qualification in the choice of the emperor, and also in his deification by the Senate after his death.<sup>23</sup> Stefanovic notes in his comprehensive survey of the Roman *ἄξιος/dignus* concept that this quality, though not reserved exclusively for the emperors, “when linked to the throne (as in Rev. 4-5) it had royal significance.”<sup>24</sup> Similarly, in Josephus the concept is applied to the Israelite kings Saul and Solomon in the context of their coronation.<sup>25</sup>

### 1.3. Interpretation

#### 1.3.1. The Drama of the Scroll

While Rev. 4 focuses on the heavenly throne and its context, the climax of the vision is reached in the dramatic scene of ch. 5 evolving around the sealed book and the Lamb, which lie at the “theological heart” of the book of Revelation.<sup>26</sup> The scene begins with a reference to “the One sitting on the throne,” the central figure of ch. 4, but the attention is directed to a new feature, the sealed βιβλίον, which is located ἐπὶ τὴν δεξιὰν τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου. The translation of the phrase ἐπὶ τὴν δεξιὰν is problematic, primarily because of the meaning of the preposition ἐπί. Three possible readings have been suggested: (1) God is holding the book “in” his right hand;<sup>27</sup> (2) he is holding it “upon” the right hand, on the open

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<sup>23</sup> For the concept of merit in the Roman world, see Martin P. Charlesworth, “Pietas and Victoria: The Emperor and the Citizen,” *JRS* 33 (1943), 1-10.

<sup>24</sup> Stefanovic, *Sealed Book*, 179.

<sup>25</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 6.66; 6.346; 7.338.

<sup>26</sup> Loren L. Johns, *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John: An Investigation into its Origins and Rhetorical Force* (WUNT, 2/167; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 159.

<sup>27</sup> Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John: Studies in Introduction with a Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1967), 504; George B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (BNTC; London: Adam & Charles Black, 1966), 70; Jacques Ellul, *Apocalypse: The Book of Revelation* (trans. George W. Schreiner; New York: Seabury Press, 1977), 144.

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palm;<sup>28</sup> and (3) the book is located at his right side.<sup>29</sup> It is well known that the expression “God’s right hand” is an Old Testament anthropomorphism representing his power and authority.<sup>30</sup> However, the emphasis of the description is not on the physical attribute, but on the close relation of the scroll with the One who holds it and on the hidden nature of the scroll’s sealed content. Through this opening picture a sense of expectancy is created, since the details suggest a sort of divine decree.<sup>31</sup>

The vision of ch. 5 revolves around the rhetorical question raised in 5:2, which provides the focus for the development of the drama: τίς ἄξιός ἀνοίξει τὸ βιβλίον καὶ λύσαι τὰς σφραγίδας αὐτοῦ (“Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?”). The opening of the seals is strongly stressed in the chapter, since ἀνοίξει is repeated four times before the introduction of the Lamb and once additionally in the hymnic praise of this redeemer figure.<sup>32</sup> Still, the main emphasis is on the concept of worthiness, the qualification needed to perform the task of opening the sealed book. It has been convincingly argued that ἄξιός ties the scene together, since the term itself appears repeatedly throughout the drama: in the opening question of the angel (5:2), in John’s response to the universal quest for an ἄξιός

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<sup>28</sup> Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St John: The Greek Text with Introduction Notes and Indices* (London: Macmillan, 1906), 75; James Moffatt, “The Revelation of St John the Divine” in *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (5 vols.; London: Hodder & Stoughton; New York: George H. Doran, 1910), V, 382; Robert H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John: With Introd., Notes, and Indices, also the Greek Text and English Translation* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), I, 136.

<sup>29</sup> Ranko Stefanovic, “The Meaning and Significance of the ἐπὶ τὴν δεξιάν for the Location of the Sealed Scroll (Revelation 5:1) and Understanding the Scene of Revelation 5,” *BR* 46 (2001), 42-54.

<sup>30</sup> E.g. Exod. 15:6, 12; Job 40:14; Ps. 17:7; 18:35; 20:6; 21:8; 44:3; Isa. 41:10; 48:13; Lam., 2:3-4.

<sup>31</sup> Craig R. Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 76.

<sup>32</sup> Rev. 5:2, 3, 4, 5, 9. Grant R. Osborne (*Revelation* [BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002], 251) argues referring to Beckwith, Charles, Mounce and Thomas that the emphasis on the scroll’s opening is further stressed by the word order in 5:2 with ἀνοίξει in the first place. He suggests a *hysteron-proteron* here according which “the opening of the scroll is of first priority, and the breaking of the seals the means by which that is to be accomplished.” In contrast, Gregory K. Beale (*The Book of Revelation* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999], 338) views the construction as “awkward” and denies the possibility of *hysteron-proteron*, since the focus of the chapter is on the issue of authority.



figure (5:4) and also in the hymnic material at the end of the chapter (5:9, 12).<sup>33</sup>

The cosmic significance of the drama around the opening of the scroll is clearly highlighted. The importance of the task is indicated by the motif of universality which is reflected in three different expressions. First, in the formula “no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth” (5:3), which is part of the response to the universal search for an ἄξιός figure. Second, in the hymnic statement about the effect of the Lamb’s sacrifice, which purchases people “from every tribe, language, people and nation” (5:9). Third, in worshipping of “the One sitting on the throne” and the Lamb by “every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth and in the sea” (5:13). As Roloff rightly notes, the task of opening the scroll is not related to the disclosure of the future, but it rather implies “the discharge of God’s plan for history vis-à-vis the world, the setting in motion of the world event toward the end that God has planned for it.”<sup>34</sup> The distress over the possibility of this plan not being realized is indicated by John’s weeping.<sup>35</sup> Thus, at the beginning of ch. 5 a rhetorical tension is built by “underscoring both the importance of history’s resolution and the tragedy that proceeds from the lack of such a resolution.”<sup>36</sup> However, after the dramatization John’s attention is directed to the Lion/Lamb figure, who appears on the scene as an ἄξιός figure providing a solution to the cosmic problem.

### 1.3.2. The Lion/Lamb Figure

The Lion/Lamb figure, introduced at the heart of Rev. 5, has been rightly considered to be “one of the most mind-wrenching and theologically

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<sup>33</sup> Murphy, *Fallen is Babylon*, 192.

<sup>34</sup> Jürgen Roloff, *Revelation* (trans. J.E. Alsup; CC; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 77.

<sup>35</sup> The reason for John’s weeping has been interpreted similarly in Caird, *Revelation*, 73; Beale, *Revelation*, 348. Less likely is the interpretation that argues for weeping over the “moral incapacity” of the created beings (Swete, *Apocalypse*, 77; Charles H. Talbert, *The Apocalypse: A Reading of the Revelation of John* [Louisville, KY: Westminster / John Knox Press, 1994], 28-29) or because John could not find out the content of the scroll (Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 508; Moffatt, “Revelation,” 383). Also a symbolic interpretation of the weeping has been suggested. Roloff (*Revelation*, 77) views John’s reaction as “the retrospective summary of the heretofore vain and shattered messianic expectation of Israel,” while Johns (*Lamb Christology*, 163 n. 46), on the basis of the typological function of weeping in the Jeremiah and Baruch tradition, suggests “a response to the judgment of God,” a heightened “pathos in one’s recognition that injustice is prevailing and God’s will is being thwarted.”

<sup>36</sup> Johns, *Lamb Christology*, 170.

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pregnant transformations of imagery in literature.”<sup>37</sup> As “a spectacular tour de force,”<sup>38</sup> it is of crucial significance for understanding Revelation’s rhetoric and theology generally.

It is while weeping over the cosmic problem that John first hears of “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” (ὁ λέων ὁ ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Ἰουδα) as a solution, further qualified as “the Root of David” (ἡ ῥίζα Δαυίδ). These titles are drawn from Gen. 49:9 and Isa. 11:1-5. Both were *loci classici* of Jewish Messianic hope in the first century C.E., understood as referring to the rising of the Messiah, the king *par excellence*, who will sit upon the throne of David.<sup>39</sup> They were also favorite texts at Qumran that were interpreted with strong militaristic overtone.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, the connection between the imagery of the Lion of Judah and Root of David and the idea of triumph in Rev. 5:5 strongly evokes messianic overtones and points to the appearance of a new David, victorious over the enemies of Israel.<sup>41</sup>

Hearing about the Lion is followed by the vision of the Lamb, who is described in terms of his physical appearance before any motion is indicated. Most importantly, he has been slain (ἐσφαγμένον), but he is pictured also as having seven horns (κέρατα ἑπτὰ) and seven eyes (ὀφθαλμοὺς ἑπτὰ). The question of the source of John’s lamb imagery has generated much discussion.<sup>42</sup> I find the interpretation of the imagery in

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<sup>37</sup> M. Eugene Boring, “Narrative Christology in the Apocalypse,” *CBQ* 54 (1992), 702-23(708).

<sup>38</sup> James L. Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed: A Narrative Critical Approach to John’s Apocalypse* (BibIS, 32; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 132.

<sup>39</sup> For the messianic interpretation of the “Lion of the Tribe of Judah,” see 1QSb 5:29; 4Ezra 11:37-12:2. For the “Root of David” as a messianic title, see 4QFlor 1:11-12; 4QpIsa<sup>a</sup> Frag. A; Pss. Sol. 17:24, 35-37; 4Ezra 13:10; 1En. 49:3; 62:2; T. Jud. 24:4-6.

<sup>40</sup> For both passages combined, see 4QP Bless; 1QSb 5:20-29; 4Ezra 12:31-32.

<sup>41</sup> Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), 180-82, 213-15.

<sup>42</sup> The following general suggestions have been put forth: (1) the Christian interpretation of Isa. 53 (Comblin, *Apocalypse*, 17-34); (2) astrological speculation (Franz Boll, *Aus der Offenbarung Johannis: Hellenistische Studien zum Weltbild der Apokalypse* [Stoicheia: SGAWGW, 1; Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1914], 44-46; Bruce J. Malina, *On the Genre and Message of Revelation: Star Visions and Sky Journeys* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995], 78-79, 101-04, 111-12); (3) Jewish liturgical practices (Holtz, *Christologie*, 44-47; Hoffmann, *Destroyer*, 117-19); (4) traditions of animal imagery in Jewish apocalypticism (Charles, *Revelation*, I, 141; C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954], 230-38). The imagery has also been considered by source critics such as Weyland and Vischer a later Christian interpolation into an originally Jewish source (see Wilhelm Bousset, *Die Offenbarung*

terms of reflecting primarily sacrificial ideas most convincing. As has been pointed out above, the sacrificial idea is recalled primarily by the paschal lamb typology. This interpretation is supported by the application of ἐσφαγμένον to the Lamb, the strong cultic background of the vision and Revelation's interpretation of the Lamb's victory in terms of a new exodus. The Lamb imagery also alludes to the suffering servant of Yahweh in Isa. 53, a concept frequently applied to the passion and crucifixion of Jesus in the early church.<sup>43</sup> The suffering servant is compared to a lamb led to slaughter (ὡς πρόβατον ἐπὶ σφαγῆν ἤχθη; 53:7), a statement thematically mirrored in the Lamb concept in Rev. 5. Also the idea of the vicarious and redemptive nature of the servant's suffering, running throughout the entire description of Isa. 53, shows close affinity with the concept of ransom in Rev. 5:9. Thus, we can speak of a joint paschal/servant of Yahweh sacrificial background, which might be further supported by the possibility of a common background in the Aramaic ܠܒܢ with its twofold meaning: "lamb" as well as "boy" or "servant."<sup>44</sup>

Revelation's Lamb imagery is primarily rooted in a sacrificial background, but it has a militaristic overtone generally in the book. On the basis of Jewish apocalyptic literature, this leads to a suggestion of the influence of the concept of divine warrior ram alongside or instead of the sacrificial background.<sup>45</sup> While the Lamb in Rev. 5:6 is pictured with seven horns and the horn as a symbol of power has a long tradition in Hebrew

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*Johannis* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 5th ed., 1906], 111-13).

<sup>43</sup> Acts 8:32; *Barn.* 5:2; *1Clem.* 16:7; Justin, *Dial.* 72:3; 114:2.

<sup>44</sup> Heinrich Kraft, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (HNT, 16a; Tübingen: Mohr, 1974), 109; Beale, *Revelation*, 351.

<sup>45</sup> Three texts have primarily been used to argue this tradition: *T. Jos.* 19:8; *T. Benj.* 3:8 and *1En.* 89-90. Though *T. Jos.* 19:8 is often viewed as a valid argument (e.g. John C. O'Neil, "The Lamb of God in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs," *JSNT* 2 [1979], 2-30), Joachim Jeremias ("ἀμνός" in *TDNT*, I, 338-41[338]) notes: "The description of the Redeemer as a lamb is unknown to later Judaism; the only possible occurrence (*Test. Jos.* 19) falls under the suspicion of being a Christian interpolation." The same is the case with *T. Benj.* 3:8 (contra B. Murelstein, "Das Lamm in *Test. Jos.* 19:8," *ZNW* 58 [1967], 273-79). Horned lambs appear also in *1En.* 90:9 representing the Maccabees, while the Messiah appears as a lamb with "big black horns" in 90:30. However, these figures are part of the complex animal allegory of *1En.* 85-90, which portrays David and Solomon also as lambs before they become rams ascending to throne (89:45, 48). Also significant is a late (11th century C.E.) tradition preserved in *Targ. Ps.-J. Exod.* 1:15, in which Moses is portrayed as a lamb who destroys Egypt.

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thought,<sup>46</sup> the evidence for establishing the existence of a militaristic lamb-redeemer figure in the apocalyptic traditions of Early Judaism is weak.<sup>47</sup> For this reason its influence on the Revelation lamb imagery cannot be demonstrated in spite of the militaristic character of this figure in Revelation. The possibility of translating ἄρνιον as a “ram” has also been suggested.<sup>48</sup> Under the influence of Charles, attention has often been drawn to the difference between the lamb terminology of the Fourth Gospel (ἄμνος) and that of Revelation (ἄρνιον). However, the fact that, in spite of the exclusive use of ἄρνιον in Revelation, the term also occurs in Jn 21:15 with the identical meaning to ἄμνος has been overlooked. This connection is attested also in numerous Old Testament and Jewish texts.<sup>49</sup> The linguistic evidence suggests that Revelation’s ἄρνιον should be translated as a “lamb” or a “little lamb,”<sup>50</sup> though the character of the figure also includes a military aspect despite the lack of a direct influence of the concept of the apocalyptic warrior ram. It can be concluded that John’s Lamb imagery is unique and creative not just because of the Lamb’s combined functions, but also because of his unprecedented physical appearance with seven horns and seven eyes.

The Lion/Lamb imagery in Rev. 5:5-6 reflects John’s literary technique of juxtaposing more than one image with a single referent. There is a disagreement concerning the purpose of the juxtaposition, which is understood in various ways, depending on the interpretation of the Lamb

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<sup>46</sup> On the horn imagery, see Margit L. Süring, *The Horn-Motif: In the Hebrew Bible and Related Ancient Near Eastern Literature and Iconography* (AUSDDS, 4; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1980).

<sup>47</sup> For a comprehensive discussion on the question, see Johns, *Lamb Christology*, 76-107.

<sup>48</sup> This idea is argued in Friedrich Spitta, *Streitfragen der Geschichte Jesu* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1907), 172-224. For a persuasive critic, see Otfried Hofius, “ἄρνιον—Widder oder Lamm? Erwägungen zur Bedeutung des Wortes in der Johannesapokalypse,” *ZNW* 89 (1998), 272-81.

<sup>49</sup> Jer. 11:19; 50:45; Ps. 93:4, 6; Isa. 40:11; *Pss. Sol.* 8:28; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.221, 251.

<sup>50</sup> Gyula Takács uses the Hungarian expression “báránka” (“little lamb”) consistently in his commentary as a translation for ἄρνιον. For his explanation, see *A Jelenések könyve: egzegézis* (Budapest: Paulus Hungarus–Kairos, 2000), 130. However, it is acknowledged that by the first century the term ἄρνιον most probably had no longer a diminutive nuance (*BAGD*, 108), but was synonymous with πρόβατον (“sheep”; e.g. Jn 21:15-17). Beale (*Revelation*, 354) rightly notes that “if the diminutive nuance still held, it intensified the contrast between the powerful lion image of Old Testament prophecy and the fulfillment through the little, apparently powerless lamb.”

imagery.<sup>51</sup> It has been argued by the proponents of the militaristic lamb figure background that there is neither contrast nor surprise in the Lion/Lamb juxtaposition—the imageries appear rather as complementary.<sup>52</sup>

On the other hand, it needs to be observed that the Lamb imagery continues to make its presence felt throughout the book, while the Lion from the tribe of Judah completely disappears. The reason for the Lion's giving way to the Lamb is interpreted by Strawn as grounded in the ambivalent use of the Lion imagery in the precedent literature. As he rightly notes, the symbol is “potentially ambiguous of an image to serve as the primary metaphor for the Messiah-Christ figure.”<sup>53</sup> Therefore, it is more appropriate to view the juxtaposition as a technique of reinterpretation of the traditional messianic material. In this regard Sweet rightly argues that “what John hears, the traditional Old Testament expectation of military deliverance, is reinterpreted by what he sees, the historical fact of a sacrificial death.”<sup>54</sup> The result of the reinterpretation is the forging of a new symbol of conquest by sacrificial death. However, Bauckham rightly warns that the juxtaposition does not dismiss the hopes embodied in John's messianic titles, but only reinterprets them.<sup>55</sup> In line with this reasoning

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<sup>51</sup> For the overview of the discussion, see Rebecca Skaggs and Thomas Doyle, “Lion/Lamb in Revelation,” *CBR* 7 (2009), 362-75(367-71).

<sup>52</sup> J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 89; Timo Eskola, *Messiah and the Throne: Jewish Merkabah Mysticism and Early Christian Exaltation Discourse*, (WUNT, 2/142; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 213; Gottfried Schimanowski, *Die himmlische Liturgie in der Apokalypse des Johannes: Die frühjüdischen Traditionen in Offenbarung 4-5 unter Einschluss der Hekhalotliteratur* (WUNT, 2/154; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 213.

<sup>53</sup> For a comprehensive argument, see Brent A. Strawn, “Why Does the Lion Disappear in Revelation 5? Leonine Imagery in Early Jewish and Christian Literature,” *JSP* 17 (2007), 37-74.

<sup>54</sup> John Sweet, *Revelation* (TPI New Testament Commentaries; London: SCM; Philadelphia, PA: Trinity Press, 1990), 125.

<sup>55</sup> Bauckham, *Climax*, 183. It has been also argued that the Lion/Lamb juxtaposition involves mutual interpretation and not simply the replacing of one element with another. For example, Resseguie (*Revelation Unsealed*, 34) points out: “The Lion of the tribe of Judah interprets what John sees: death on the cross (the Lamb) is not defeat but is the way to power and victory (the Lion). In this instance, seeing also reinterprets the hearing. The traditional expectation of messianic conquest by military deliverance (the Lion of Judah) is reinterpreted so that messianic conquest occurs through sacrificial death (the Lamb).” While Steve Moyise (“Does the Lion Lie Down with the Lamb?” in *Studies in the Book of Revelation*, ed. Steve Moyise [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2001], 181-94[189]) is also a proponent of the mutual interpretation, he criticizes Resseguie for inconsistency in his application of this principle.

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Knight aptly speaks of “a powerful subversion of reality,” since the conquering, represented by the Lion, alludes to the cross, the manner of the conquest.<sup>56</sup> Though the object of the conquest is not specified, the cumulative aorist of ἐνίκησεν emphatically stresses the completion of the victory, probably over all that is opposed to God’s rule.<sup>57</sup> Thus, the theology of the cross is given central significance in Rev. 5.<sup>58</sup>

#### 1.3.3. The Lamb and the Throne

The Lamb’s sharing of God’s throne is almost unanimously accepted in reference to Rev. 3:21, 7:17 and 22:3. He is also somehow related to the throne in 5:6; however, the meaning of the ambiguous phrase ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ τῶν τεσσάρων ζώων καὶ ἐν μέσῳ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων (“in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders”) has given rise to divided opinions concerning the precise relationship. The *crux interpretum* is the translation of the expression ἐν μέσῳ. As Aune notes, three major possibilities have been argued concerning this noteworthy translation problem. First, ἐν μέσῳ refers to a position “in the middle” of an area. Following this rendering BAGD suggests the translation “on the center of the throne and among the four living creatures.”<sup>59</sup> Second, the expression points to the distance between two things. According to this possibility the Lamb is positioned somewhere “between” the throne, the four living creatures and the elders.<sup>60</sup> Third, ἐν μέσῳ designates a position within an area occupied by other objects. The translation is “among” or “with” which positions the Lamb standing in close proximity to the throne.<sup>61</sup> An argument will be suggested here in favor of the first translation, which positions the Lamb on the throne. While this

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<sup>56</sup> Jonathan Knight (*Revelation* [Readings; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], 63) rightly recognizes that the association of the victory motif with the cross is a shared idea of Rev. 5 with the Fourth Gospel.

<sup>57</sup> Though ἐνίκησεν is without object in Rev. 5:5, Richard Bauckham (*The Theology of the Book of Revelation* [New Testament Theology; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993], 74) rightly relates the victory of the Lamb to the defeat of Satan by Michael in 12:7-9.

<sup>58</sup> Aune, *Revelation*, I, 352.

<sup>59</sup> BAGD, 635.

<sup>60</sup> Charles, *Revelation*, I, 140.

<sup>61</sup> Aune, *Revelation*, I, 352.

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view has been widely advocated,<sup>62</sup> no answer has been offered to the objection of the Lamb's distance from the throne. It has been pointed out by opponents of this view that the text mentions the Lamb's movement towards the throne and taking of the scroll immediately after the initial introductory description in which ἐν μέσῳ defines the Lamb's position in relation to the throne (5:6-7).<sup>63</sup> The discussion in this section, besides offering an argument for Christ's enthronement in ch. 5, will also attempt to provide a satisfactory answer to this objection.

The occupation of the heavenly throne by the Lamb in 5:6 is often justified almost exclusively on the basis of the wider context of Christ's enthronement in the book (3:21; 7:17; 22:3).<sup>64</sup> Knight is one of the rare exceptions, as he goes beyond the contextual argument and provides substantial exegetical evidence.<sup>65</sup> He convincingly argues that the correct translation of 5:6 needs to be balanced around the three καί rather than the two ἐν μέσῳ references. He suggests that the translation approach focusing on ἐν μέσῳ is inadequate, since it results in removing the creatures from the

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<sup>62</sup> E.g. Martin Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995), 150-51; J. Ramsey Michaels, *Revelation* (IVPNTCS, 20; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 95-96; Richard Bauckham, "The Throne of God and the Worship of Jesus" in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origin of the Worship of Jesus*, eds. Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila and Gladys S. Lewis (JSJSup, 63; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 43-69(64); Louis A. Brighton, *Revelation* (Concordia Commentary; Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing, 1999), 137, 140; Darrell D. Hannah, "Of Cherubim and the Divine Throne: Rev. 5.6 in Context," *NTS* 49 (2003), 528-42; Edmondo F. Lupieri, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse of John* (trans. Maria P. Johnson and Adam Kamesar; Italian Texts & Studies on Religion & Society; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 139; Charles A. Gieschen, "The Lamb (Not the Man) on the Divine Throne" in *Israel's God and Rebecca's Children: Christology and Community in Early Judaism and Christianity. Essays in Honor of Larry W. Hurtado and Alan F. Segal*, eds. David B. Capes et al. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 227-43(236).

<sup>63</sup> For the objection, see e.g. Charles, *Revelation*, I, 140; Robert G. Bratcher and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on the Revelation to John* (UBS Handbook Series; New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 100-01; Aune, *Revelation*, I, 352; Beale, *Revelation*, 350; Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 207; Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 132.

<sup>64</sup> This is usually characteristic to the Christological studies as e.g. Hengel, *Studies*, 150-51; Bauckham, "Throne of God," 64; Gieschen, "Lamb," 236.

<sup>65</sup> Jonathan Knight, "The Enthroned Christ of Revelation 5:6 and the Development of Christian Theology" in *Studies in the Book of Revelation*, ed. Steve Moyise (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2001), 43-50.

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throne (4:6), at least to the extent that they allow the Lamb to intervene between the throne and them. Since the geography of the throne reflects an arrangement in concentric circles, Knight logically concludes that “the Lamb cannot stand between the throne and the creatures *and also* among the elders.”<sup>66</sup> For this reason he claims that the viewpoint focusing on the three *καί* references and the phrases following them indicate the following interpretation: “The first phrase states that the Lamb occupies the throne of God. The second phrase states this means by definition that the Lamb also stands in the midst of the living creatures. The third phrase states that the Lamb sits among the elders in the sense that the elders surround the throne of God and form a protective boundary for it.”<sup>67</sup> Knight’s argument is persuasive. According to his interpretation, the text further stresses the central significance of the introduction of the Lamb, who steps into the throne-room drama as a major figure of the book. Though it seems that his introduction is deliberately postponed until ch. 5, he is impressively promoted here to an elevated position indicated through occupation of the heavenly throne.<sup>68</sup> It would be strange if the display of the Lamb’s unique

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<sup>66</sup> Knight, “Enthroned Christ,” 46.

<sup>67</sup> Knight, “Enthroned Christ,” 46.

<sup>68</sup> It has been argued on the basis of a three-part ancient Egyptian enthronement pattern that the scene of Rev. 5 is to be interpreted as an enthronement of Christ (See e.g. Holtz, *Christologie*, 27-29; George R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation* [NCB; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978], 110; Roloff, *Revelation*, 75-76). This view has been strongly criticized by W.C. van Unnik (“‘Worthy is the Lamb’: The Background of Apoc. 5” in *Mélanges Bibliques en hommage au R.P. Béda Rigaux*, eds. Albert Descamps and R.P. André de Halleux [Gembloux: Duculot, 1970], 445-61). More recently, Stefanovic (*Sealed Book*, 206-25) persuasively argued for an enthronement ritual primarily on the basis of parallels with coronation scenes of the Old Testament. This approach has been supported also by Margaret Barker (“Enthronement and Apotheosis: The Vision in Revelation 4-5” in *New Heaven and New Earth. Prophecy and the Millennium—Essays in Honour of Anthony Gelston*, eds. P.J. Harland and C.T.R. Hayward [VTSup, 77; Leiden: Brill, 1999], 217-27). Similarly, Beale (*Revelation*, 356-57) subscribes to this view, mostly because of the close affinity of Rev. 5 with Dan. 7. In contrast, the enthronement view has been recently labelled by Aune (*Revelation*, I, 336) as a “scholarly myth.” He rather views Rev. 5 as describing the investiture of the Lamb, since this concept “refers to the act of establishing someone in office or the ratification of the office that someone already holds informally.” According to a further interpretive possibility Rev. 5 reflects only a commission in the heavenly court similar to the Old Testament prophetic commissions (Hans P. Müller, “Die himmlische Ratsversammlung: Motivgeschichtliches zu Apc 5:1-5,” *ZNW* 54 [1963], 254-67; Heinz Giesen, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* [RNT; Regensburg: Pustet, 1997], 159-60). The combination of the enthronement and commission interpretations has also been advocated (Eduard Lohse, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* [Neue Testament Deutsch; Göttingen:



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significance in the heavenly setting was otherwise in a book that advocates high Christology.

An examination of ch. 5 reveals further evidence which indirectly point to the Lamb's sitting on the throne in the throne-room vision. First, the worship offered to the Lamb by the four living creatures, the twenty-four elders, the many angels and every creature (5:8-14) implies his divine character. As Gieschen notes, "The veneration of the lamb. . . is another way through which this scene depicts Christ within the mystery of the one God, because to worship anyone other than YHWH is idolatry."<sup>69</sup> Out of the five hymns of the vision two are directed to the Father (4:8, 11) and two to the Lamb (5:9-10, 12). While the two pairs of doxologies share a number of motifs that imply the unique relation of the two figures, the praise reaches its climax in the fifth hymn in which they are jointly worshiped. This scene "rounds off the vision"<sup>70</sup> and conveys the closing message that "the One sitting on the throne" and the Lamb are divine beings of equal status, who act jointly towards the same end. It would be inconceivable if the idea of divine unity was not expressed by sharing the same divine throne in a vision which primarily highlights the elevation of the Lamb. Second, the taking of the scroll in 5:7 presupposes an act of coming to the divine throne (ἦλθεν καὶ εἴληφεν; "he came and took"). Though the idea of transferring authority has been generally noted in the text, the significance of the background in Dan. 7:13 has often been overlooked.<sup>71</sup> Beale convincingly argues that this Danielic text is the only Old Testament passage in which "a divine, Messiah-like figure is portrayed as approaching God's heavenly throne in order to receive authority."<sup>72</sup> He calls our attention to numerous parallels between the two scenes: the opening of books (βίβλοι in Dan. 7:10; βιβλίον in Rev. 5:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9), approaching God's throne (ἔρχομαι in Dan. 7:13; ἔρχομαι in Rev. 5:7), receiving authority to reign (δίδωμι in Dan. 7:14; λαμβάνω in Rev. 5:7),

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Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960], 44).

<sup>69</sup> Gieschen, "Lamb," 236.

<sup>70</sup> David R. Carnegie, "Worthy is the Lamb: The Hymns in Revelation" in *Christ the Lord: Studies in Christology Presented to Donald Guthrie*, ed. Harold H. Rowdon (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1982), 243-56(251).

<sup>71</sup> E.g. James D.G. Dunn, "The Danielic Son of Man in the New Testament" in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, eds. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint (2 vols.; VTSup, 83; Leiden: Brill, 2001), II, 528-49(536).

<sup>72</sup> Gregory K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 211.

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designating both figures' authority by *τιμή* (Dan. 7:14; Rev. 5:12-13) and *δόξα* (Dan. 7:14; Rev. 5:12-13), and a universal recognition of the received authority (Dan. 7:14; Rev. 5:13-14).<sup>73</sup> Again, the Lamb's possession of the throne is implied by the concepts of authority and reign, and also indicated by the universal recognition of his elevated status. Third, the repeated emphasis on the "right" of "the One sitting on the throne" (5:1, 7) might possibly be an allusion to the enthronement tradition of Ps. 110:1 (*ἐκ δεξιῶν μου*; "at my right hand"),<sup>74</sup> which played a central role in the expression of Christ's ascension to the throne in early Christian writings.<sup>75</sup>

As mentioned above, the most common objection to the interpretation of Rev. 5:6 in terms of the Lamb's occupation of the throne is the statement *ἦλθεν καὶ ἔληφεν* ("he came and took") in 5:7. The expression implies distance between the divine throne and the Lamb, and also movement in the direction of the throne for the purpose of taking the sealed book. This objection is based on the presupposition of chronological continuity between 5:6 and 5:7 which holds that the Lamb's location *ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου* in 5:6 is the starting point of his movement towards the throne in 5:7. For example, Beale states that the "broader context of 5:9ff. would imply that there he is sitting on the throne," while "in 5:6 it appears that the Lamb is near the throne, preparing to make his approach to be enthroned."<sup>76</sup> I would like to suggest that there is a chronological discontinuity between 5:6 and 5:7 which explains the tension between the occupation of the throne in 5:6 and the distance in 5:7. The argument in favor of this suggestion is based on the understanding of 5:5-6 in terms of John's identification-description literary technique. Stefanovic explains the essence of this pattern followed in Revelation: "Whenever a new key player in the book is introduced, he/she is first identified in terms of his/her personal description or historical role. . . Once the player is identified, John moves into the description of the player's function and activities that are

<sup>73</sup> Beale, *Use of Daniel*, 211-12.

<sup>74</sup> On the contrary, Hengel (*Studies*, 151) denies John's allusion to Ps. 110:1 here, though, he advocates Christ's sitting on the throne in Rev. 5:6. He argues that John probably intentionally avoids the language of Ps. 110:1 and the possibility of "an all too anthropomorphic conception of a bisellium with two 'gods' . . . sitting next to one another."

<sup>75</sup> For the role of Ps. 110:1 in the formation of early Christian Christology, see Martin Hengel, "'Setzte dich zu meiner Rechten!': Die Inthronisation Christi zur Rechten Gottes und Psalm 110:1" in *Le Trône de Dieu*, ed. Marc Philonenko (WUNT, 69; Tübingen: Mohr, 1993), 108-94; Eskola, *Messiah and the Throne*, 158-216.

<sup>76</sup> Beale, *Revelation*, 350.

especially important to the vision.<sup>77</sup> This literary technique is universally applied to all the major characters of Revelation including the Lamb. Since he appears for the first time in the book in ch. 5, the description of his physical characteristics and status is given before any of his activities are narrated. Actually, the language used in 5:5-6 is the language of identification/description, in contrast with that of 5:7-14, which is the language of action. While 5:7-14 records an action taken by the Lamb with the reactions to it within the heavenly setting, in 5:5-6 he is merely identified in terms of his qualities and status. For this reason the relationship of the two passages within the same vision cannot be interpreted in terms of chronological continuity, because of a major difference in their literary and theological function.

At the end of this discussion it is appropriate to note that the throne motif plays a central role both in the introduction of the Father in ch. 4 (ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον καθήμενος; 4:2) and the Lamb in ch. 5 (ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου; 5:6). While both figures are pictured in the throne-room vision as occupants of the heavenly throne, there is no indication of a throne rivalry, since John's view is that the Lamb shares God's throne.<sup>78</sup> This idea is consistent in all the texts which relate the Lamb to the heavenly throne (3:21; 5:6; 7:17; 22:3). Knight rightly concludes of the implication of the concept of a shared throne: "Two beings, one throne means one shared authority and as close a possible union as it is possible to achieve."<sup>79</sup> The rest of the book of Revelation describes how this shared authority is practiced and the challenge to it handled.

## 2. The Heavenly Temple Festival (7:9-17)

The second most developed throne scene in the book of Revelation is described in 7:9-17. The heavenly throne is referred to seven times in this

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<sup>77</sup> Ranko Stefanovic, "Finding Meaning in the Literary Patterns of Revelation," *JATS* 13 (2002), 27-43(28-29). This literary technique is first employed in 1:9-20 which introduces the speaker who addresses the seven churches in chs. 2-3. In ch. 4 "the One sitting on the throne" is introduced, while ch. 5 introduces the Lamb, who will break the seals of the book in 6:1-8:1. In 7:4-9 the 144,000, who reappear in 14:1-5, are characterized. In ch. 11 the identification of the two witnesses (11:4) is followed by the description of their activities and experiences. Ch. 12 introduces the women clothed with the sun (12:1) and the dragon (12:2-3), while in ch. 13 the two beasts are characterized before describing their activities (13:1-2, 11). In 17:3-5 the same literary technique is applied to the prostitute sitting on the beast, etc.

<sup>78</sup> Frank J. Matera, *New Testament Christology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1999), 207.

<sup>79</sup> Knight, "Enthroned Christ," 47.

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section and it functions as the focal point of this scene of celebration. The term θρόνος four times signifies the center of heavenly geography (7:9, 11[2x], 15), twice it appears within a circumlocution for God (7:10, 15) and in the climactic section of 7:14-17 it is once associated with the Lamb (7:17).

#### 2.1. Contextual and Structural Considerations

The heavenly temple festival of 7:9-17 forms the climax of the Seven Seals heptad.<sup>80</sup> The whole of ch. 7 is strategically located after the sixth seal which portrays in the language of the Day of the Lord the universal expression of the wrath of God and the Lamb in terms of cosmic turbulence (6:12-17). Since the sixth seal is concluded by a rhetorical question concerning the survival of the *parousia* (τίς δύναται σταθῆναι; “who can stand”; 6:17), the vision of ch. 7 appears to provide an answer to it. Thus, we have here an interlude that functions as a wider interpretive framework against which the entire vision of 6:1-8:1 may be understood more profoundly.<sup>81</sup> The throne motif indicates not just a literary, but also a theological relationship between the sixth seal and the heavenly temple festival. In both contexts people are depicted as facing the divine throne. While in 6:16 the throne is associated with wrath and judgment, in ch. 7 its function is positive as the elect stand in front of it in celebration. The contrast between the two groups, standing in front of the throne in two different contexts, is deepened by ascribing universality to both.<sup>82</sup> This connection provides a contextual argument for the centrality of the throne

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<sup>80</sup> Leonard Thompson, “Cult and Eschatology in the Apocalypse of John,” *JR* 49 (1969), 330-50(336).

<sup>81</sup> The close relation of Rev. 7 with the Seven Seals vision is demonstrated in the following studies: Håkan Ulfsgård, *Feast and Future: Revelation 7:9-17 and the Feast of Tabernacles* (ConBNT, 22; Lund: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1989), 31-34; Müller, *Microstructural Analysis*, 252-69; Stephen Pattemore, *Souls under the Altar: Relevance Theory and the Discourse Structure of Revelation* (UBSMS, 9; New York: UBS, 2003), 128-30. These studies argue that Rev. 7 is the expansion of the sixth seal of 6:12-17. This view has been rejected in Frederick David Mazzaferri, *The Genre of the Book of Revelation from a Source-Critical Perspective* (BZNW, 54; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1989), 335-36.

<sup>82</sup> The group of the “kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man” (6:15) hiding from the throne of God are contrasted to the “great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language” (7:9) which celebrates the victory in God’s presence. While the motif of universality is applied to both groups, their relation to the divine throne seems intentionally contrasted.

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motif for the vision of 7:9-17 in which all of the action revolves around the heavenly center.

The answer to the question “who can stand?” (6:17) receives a two partite answer in ch. 7, as indicated by the structuring device μετὰ τοῦτο εἶδον / μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον. In the two scenes of the vision the people of God are portrayed through two different descriptions. In 7:1-8 they are the sealed 144,000, while in 7:9-17 they are the great multitude standing in front of the throne. The two scenes are thematically closely related in spite of the shift in the location: while the sealing of the 144,000 takes place on the earth, the celebration of the multitude of elect is in the heavenly context. Since all seven throne references of the vision are found in the heavenly scene, our investigation will primarily focus on 7:9-17.

### 2.2. Background

The scene of 7:9-17 is related to the same heavenly context as the throne-room vision in chs. 4-5. Since both visions share the heavenly temple/palace setting, the cultic symbolism naturally continues. At the same time Israel’s prophesied restoration forms another major background, which needs to be discussed.

#### 2.2.1. Cultic Symbolism

The similarities between the cultic aspects of 7:9-17 and chs. 4-5 are numerous. It has been persuasively argued that especially the comparison with ch. 5 reveals many striking parallels.<sup>83</sup> In contrast to the throne-room vision, from which the term ναός is absent, the location of the heavenly temple festival has been clearly identified. Namely, in 7:15 it is stated that the saints “are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple” (ἐν τῷ ναῷ αὐτοῦ). On the basis of the parallelism which identifies serving God in his temple (λατρεύουσιν) with being before the throne (ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου) it can be concluded that the throne is located in the heavenly ναός.<sup>84</sup> A strong cultic connotation is evoked also by the use of

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<sup>83</sup> Nils Wilhelm Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in the Form and Function of Chiasmic Structures* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 367-68; cf. Müller, *Microstructural Analysis*, 280-86.

<sup>84</sup> Gregory Stevenson, *Power and Place: Temple and Identity in the Book of Revelation* (BZNW, 107; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2001), 255.

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λατρεύω, which appears in LXX as a “distinctively religious” expression.<sup>85</sup> Strathmann observes that עבד (“to serve”) is translated with λατρεύω in LXX with religious reference, whereas δουλεύω is used for rendering human relations. He concludes that “the translators. . . thus attempted to show even by their choice of words that the relation of service in religion is something apart from other relations.”<sup>86</sup> The priestly function of the saints in the heavenly ναός is also indicated by their white garments purified with blood (7:14) and by their service “day and night” (7:15). As Aune notes, such an unending service in the heavenly throne room exceeds normal worship practices at the Jerusalem Temple which involved cessation of service between the evening and morning sacrifices.<sup>87</sup>

The cultic background of the vision surfaces further in the liturgical material of 7:9-12 and possibly in the reference to God’s tabernacling presence among his people in 7:15 (σκηνώσει ἐπ’ αὐτούς) which has been often viewed as an allusion to the concept of God’s *shekinah*.<sup>88</sup> One of the most debated cultic symbols of the vision is related to the palm branches in the hands of the great multitude (7:9). There have been some attempts to link the imagery with the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles arguing that this event comprises the basic background to the entire scene.<sup>89</sup> However,

<sup>85</sup> H. Strathmann, “λατρεύω” in *TDNT*, IV, 58-65(60). This is the first of the only two occurrences of “λατρεύω” in Revelation. In the other reference in 22:3 the servants of God are also related to the heavenly throne which appears as the joint throne of God and the Lamb.

<sup>86</sup> Strathmann, “λατρεύω,” 60. For translation of עבד as λατρεύω, see e.g. Exod. 3:12; 4:23; 7:16, 26; 8:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3, 7, 8, 24, 26; 20:5; 23:24, 25; Deut. 4:19, 28; 5:9; 6:13; 7:4, 16; Josh. 22:27; 24:14-24, 31. עבד is translated as δουλεύω e.g. in Exod. 14:5, 12; 21:2, 6; Deut. 15:12, 18; Judg. 3:8, 14; 9:28, 38 and consistently in Genesis.

<sup>87</sup> David E. Aune (*Revelation*, II, 475) refers to Ezek. 46:1-3 and *m. Tam.* as his primary evidence in making this point.

<sup>88</sup> E.g. Craig R. Koester, *The Dwelling of God: The Tabernacle in the Old Testament, Intertestamental Jewish Literature, and the New Testament* (CBQMS, 22; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 1989), 118; Ulfsgard, *Feast and Future*, 88-89. For a critic of this connection, see Aune, *Revelation*, II, 476.

<sup>89</sup> The most detailed exegetical argument in favor of this view is presented by Ulfsgard (*Feast and Future*, 35-41, 69-107), who believes not only that the “exodus pattern” is of central importance for the understanding of 7:9-17, but also that the Feast of Tabernacles is a secondary influence. Earlier studies emphasizing the Feast of Tabernacle background include e.g. J. A. Draper, “The Heavenly Feast of Tabernacles: Revelation 7:1-17,” *JSNT* 19 (1983), 133-47; J. Comblin, “Le rassemblement du peuple de Dieu: Ap 7,2-4. 9-14,” *As Seign* 66 (1973), 42-49. For a critical evaluation of this approach, see Aune, *Revelation*, II, 448-50. Following a different line of reasoning, Ford (*Revelation*, 126) suggests that the

nothing in the text warrants the specific identification of the festival. While the palms in the hands of the saints have been viewed as the major indicator of the Feast of Tabernacles festival in 7:9-17, the imagery does not necessarily connect the scene to this specific festival, since the palm shows also a more general affinity with the Hebrew cultic setting, as both Solomon's temple and the temple in Ezekiel's vision were decorated with images of palms. For this reason I rather align myself with Stevenson's more general and cautious suggestion that 7:9-17 depicts essentially a heavenly temple festival in which the entire community of the faithful is gathered in front of the heavenly throne celebrating victory and offering praise to God.

### 2.2.2. Israel's Prophesied Restoration

It has been noted by Beale that the reward set out in the climactic section of the vision (7:15-17) is described in the language of Israel's latter-day prophesied restoration. Particularly relevant at this point is the idea of God's tabernacling presence in 7:15 (σκηνώσει), which is an allusion to the restoration prophecy of Ezek. 37:26-28 (κατασκήνωσις) as confirmed by the verbal connection.<sup>90</sup> Isa. 49:9-10 lies also in the background to the Revelation scene. The link is supported by numerous parallels related to the theme of the comfort of divine presence: never being hungry or thirsty, protection from the scorching sun, springs of living water and God's shepherding. The possibility of a link between the innumerable multitude of saints (7:9) and the Abrahamic promise of innumerable descendants has been also observed.<sup>91</sup> The scene of 7:9-17 could be understood against this background in terms of the ultimate fulfilment of the Abrahamic promise, and also as the restoration of Israel in the church, which appears as a continuation of the true Israel.

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branches may be attributed to the influence of the Maccabean victory, since 1 Macc. 13:51 refers to the Jews returning to Jerusalem after their victory "with praise and palm branches."

<sup>90</sup> Beale, *Revelation*, 441-42.

<sup>91</sup> E.g. Pierre Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John* (trans. Wendy Pradels; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 288; Aune, *Revelation*, II, 466-67; Brian K. Blount, *Revelation: A Commentary* (NLT; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2009), 150. Aune notes that the promise to Abraham took two forms: the promise of innumerable descendants and that he would be father of many nations (Gen. 17:4-6; 35:11; 48:19; Rom. 4:16-18; Justin, *Dial.* 119-120; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.115-16). He views the reflection of the former promise in Rev. 7:9a and the later in 7:9b. While this promise began to be fulfilled by the time of the exodus (Exod. 1:7; Deut. 1:10; 10:22) the multitude in Rev. 7:9 reflects the ultimate fulfillment.

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### 2.3. Interpretation

#### 2.3.1. People of God in Rev. 7

Two groups of people of God are introduced in Rev. 7 which appear for the first time in the book: the 144,000 (7:1-8) and the great multitude (7:9-17). There is no consensus on the question of the relationship between these two groups of God's servants. While numerous contrasts have been noted,<sup>92</sup> they have also been simply identified,<sup>93</sup> or a distinction has been suggested according to which the 144,000 appear as a sub-set of the great multitude.<sup>94</sup> I would like to offer an argument here in favor of the view that the two representations highlight two different aspects of the same group. First, this view is based on Revelation's identification–description literary pattern such as when John first hears about a new participant or group in the book's drama and this is followed by a viewing of the same figure or group. Thus, John first hears about the 144,000 and subsequently sees the great multitude—and the vision interprets the audition. Second, there is a parallel between the experiences of the two groups. While the sealing of the 144,000 indicates passing through turbulent times in the near future, it is explicitly stated that the great multitude is coming from “the great tribulation” (7:14). Third, the temporal and geographical differences indicate a tension, rather than a difference. Bauckham convincingly argues that both descriptions portray a messianic army, but in a different time and role. Whereas in 7:4-8 a military census preceding a holy war is recorded, in 7:9-10 the successful completion of the battle by the victorious army is celebrated. Bauckham notes that the militaristic interpretation is indicated further by the symbolism of 7:9-17: the term ὄχλος can designate also “army,” the white

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<sup>92</sup> Andrew Chester (*Messiah and Exaltation: Jewish Messianic and Visionary Traditions and New Testament Christology* [WUNT, 207; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007], 175) notes the following differences between the two groups: (1) the 144,000 is specifically numbered, while the great multitude cannot be numbered; (2) the former is symbolically represented in terms of the twelve tribes of Israel, while the later is a multinational crowd; (3) the geographical location of the 144,000 is the earth, while the great multitude is set in the heavenly world; and (4) the 144,000 is portrayed before an eschatological disaster, while the great multitude after it.

<sup>93</sup> Charles, *Revelation*, I, 199-201; Prigent, *Apocalypse*, 288.

<sup>94</sup> See e.g. Ernst Lohmeyer, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (HNT, 16; Tübingen: Mohr, 1926), 70-71; Robert H. Mounce, *Revelation* (NICNT, 17; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 161. Some scholars view the earlier group as Jews or Jewish Christians. See e.g. E. Bernard Allo, *Saint Jean L'Apocalypse* (Paris: Lecoffre, 1921), 94; Draper, “Heavenly Feast,” 136-37; A. Feuillet, “Les 144,000 Israélites marqués du ‘un sceau,’” *NovT* 9 (1967), 191-224.



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robes appear as the festal garments of the victory celebration (Tertullian, *Scorpiace* 12; 2Macc. 11:8) and the palm branches are a reminder of the celebration of triumph of the Maccabean warriors (1Macc.13:51; cf. *T. Naph.* 5:4).<sup>95</sup> Thus, it is appropriate to hold that the two groups of Rev. 7 represent two distinctive experiences of the people of God: the militant church on earth (7:1-8) and the triumphant church in heaven (7:9-17).

The great multitude is introduced with four characteristics in its identification–description pattern: (1) it is uncountable; (2) it is universally international; (3) it stands before the throne and the Lamb; and (4) the saints who comprise it are wearing white clothes and holding palm branches (7:9-10).<sup>96</sup> Most significant for the purpose of our research is the multitude’s standing in front of the throne and the Lamb (ἑστῶτες ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου καὶ ἐνώπιον τοῦ ἀρνίου; 7:9). The syntax reveals that θρόνος functions here as a circumlocution for God. The form of the circumlocution is unusual, since God is logically expected to be identified with the well-known throne circumlocution formula as in other places even within the same vision (7:15). However, in the construction the Lamb is juxtaposed with the throne, which indicates equality of status between God and the Lamb. Though the occupation of the throne by the Lamb is not stated in 7:10, the unity of the two figures is clearly emphasized in the text as they are pictured functioning closely together.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Bauckham, *Climax*, 225-26. More controversial is Bauckham’s interpretation of the great multitude as martyrs. This view is also advocated in Johannes Weiss, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes: ein Beitrag zur Literatur- und Religionsgeschichte* (FRLANT, 3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1904), 66-67; Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 288; Johann Behm, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (NTD, 11; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949), 46; Martin Kiddle, *The Revelation of St. John* (MNTC; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1947), 138-43; Caird, *Revelation*, 95; Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Revelation* (SP, 16; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), 131. The martyrological interpretation faces several difficulties. The claim of 7:14 which identifies the great multitude as those “who have come out of the great tribulation” yet have “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb” does not necessarily imply the idea of martyrdom. White garments should rather be understood as “a polyvalent metaphor for salvation, immortality, victory and purity,” the moral quality of those standing in the presence of God (Aune, *Revelation*, II, 410). Therefore, the emphasis is more on the victory over the satanic forces and faithfulness to Christ in the midst of the eschatological trial.

<sup>96</sup> As noted above, the white garments and the palm branches are associated with victory and feast celebration, themes meaningful in a military context of describing God’s holy army. This is far from suggesting that these symbols are capable of conveying only this meaning. For a symbol analysis, see Ulfgard, *Feast and Future*, 81-85, 89-92.

<sup>97</sup> Osborne, *Revelation*, 319.

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The throne as the center of the heavenly realm is brought into focus again in the vision of the heavenly temple festival. A significant aspect of the great multitude's characterization in its identification–description pattern is its standing in front of the throne (ἕστῶτες ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου; 7:9). This is the first time in the book that creatures different from celestial beings appear before the throne in a heavenly context. Spatafora interprets the “standing” of the multitude as an allusion to their resurrection. He differentiates between the functions of the prepositions ἐνώπιον and κύκλω, as they define differing relations to the heavenly throne in 7:9-17: the standing of the elect in front of (ἐνώπιον) the throne refers to the multitude's service, while the angels' standing around (κύκλω) the throne suggests more the notion of belonging to the same sphere.<sup>98</sup> This suggestion is, however, based on an artificial distinction, since standing and serving do not necessary exclude each other in God's presence. On the other hand, ἐνώπιον is used in Revelation not only of the creatures, but also of the seven spirits (1:4; 4:5), the sea of glass (4:6), the golden altar (8:3) and the lampstands (11:4) as merely physical location is indicated. Still, I concur with Spatafora's observation that the standing of the multitude in front of the heavenly throne includes more than just designating their location in the vision. The expression is of theological significance for the development of the throne motif in the book, since it occurs within the identification–description pattern of God's people. While on one hand it gives an explicit answer to the question “who is able to stand?” (6:17),<sup>99</sup> more significantly for our research, it introduces the elect primarily in terms of association with the divine throne.

I would like to suggest that a consistent pattern emerges gradually in Revelation which highlights the significance of the throne motif in the book. God is introduced in the visionary part as “the One sitting on the throne” (4:2), the Lamb as located in the midst of the throne (5:6), and the heavenly beings, including the living creatures, the elders and the angelic hosts, as standing in front and around the throne (4:4, 6, 11), whereas the elect's identity (7:9) is also intimately tied to the heavenly throne. This consistency clearly indicates the identity-defining function of the throne

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<sup>98</sup> Andrea Spatafora, *From the 'Temple of God' to God as Temple: A Theological Study of the Temple in the Book of Revelation* (Tesi Gregoriana Seria Teologia, 22; Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1997), 148.

<sup>99</sup> The connection between 7:9 and 6:17 is indicated by the verbal parallel related to the verb ἵστημι.

motif throughout the book, which, concerning the great multitude, is further highlighted by their depiction as serving God day and night before his throne in the heavenly temple.

### 2.3.2. Function of the Throne in the Context of Restored Relationships

The high Christology hinted at in the hymnic acclamation of the celebrating saints (7:10) is expounded in the explanation of the heavenly festival vision by one of the elders in 7:15-17. Though the throne motif is featured throughout the depiction of God's people in ch. 7, it is particularly central to the concluding scene. While the term *θρόνος* appears three times in this section, more significant is that the entire vision climaxes in picturing the Lamb at the center of the throne (*τὸ ἀρνίον τὸ ἀνά μέσον τοῦ θρόνου*; 7:17).

The central idea of the scene of 7:15-17 is the fulfilment of the promise of the ultimate restoration of the divine-human relationship.<sup>100</sup> Both the human and the divine aspect of the relationship are clearly indicated. On one hand, the devotion of the elect to the relationship is expressed by their engaging in an unending priestly service indicated by the use of the distinctive cultic term *λατρεύω*. The reference point of their service is the divine throne, since they are described serving in front of it in the heavenly temple day and night (7:15; cf. 7:10). On the other hand, the throne is also central to the expounding of the divine aspect of the relationship. In 7:15-17 both the Father and the Lamb are pictured in distinct texts as occupants of the heavenly throne and the benefits of their presence for redeemed

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<sup>100</sup> On the basis of structural considerations the scene of 7:1-8 could be related to the time of the sixth seal, while 7:9-17 portrays a scene occurring after the end of the great tribulation (Mounce, *Revelation*, 165; Smalley, *Revelation*, 198). As an alternative view, it has been argued primarily on the basis of temporal aspects that the vision should be understood as an ongoing process that will not be completed until the eschatological consummation (Charles, *Revelation*, I, 212-13; Ulfgard, *Feast and Future*, 100-04; Beale, *Revelation*, 443-45). For example, Charles argues this thesis on the basis that οἱ ἐρχόμενοι in 7:14 retains its temporal force as a present participle, therefore the martyred souls are still in the process of arriving from the great tribulation. On the other hand, it has been convincingly argued that in spite of the present participle form οἱ ἐρχόμενοι is to be translated in the past tense, since it expresses a simultaneous action with *ἔπλυναν* ("washed") and *ἐλεύκαναν* ("made white"), the two main verbs of 7:14 that are both in aorist (Aune, *Revelation*, II, 473; cf. Osborne, *Revelation*, 324). Daniel B. Wallace (*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996], 625) confirms this translational possibility: "The present participle is normally contemporaneous in time to the action of the main verb" (cf. BDF §339).

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humanity are listed only after emphasizing their throne occupation. Thus, in 7:15-16 the promises of spreading God's tent, the protection from hunger, thirst and scorching heat immediately follow the reference to the throne of the Father within the well-known formula ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου. Similarly, the blessing of the springs of the living water is preceded by the reference to the Lamb at the center of the throne. Thus, both aspects of the restored divine-human relationship meet in the divine throne: the service of the saints is turned towards the throne, which represents its occupants, while the divine blessings are explicitly initiated from the throne. It seems that the centrality of the throne motif in these texts highlights that the sovereign reign of God and the Lamb are the necessary context for the realization of the promises of restoration. The reference to wiping away all tears as the fulfilment of the restoration promise of Isa. 25:8 is an appropriate conclusion for the vision, as it summarizes the effect of the reign of God and the Lamb over the elect in terms of the termination of all curses that were a consequence of the broken divine-human relationships.<sup>101</sup>

3. The Throne in the New Jerusalem (22:1-5)

The vision of the New Jerusalem (21:1-22:5) is traditionally viewed as the ultimate fulfilment of the whole salvation history.<sup>102</sup> After the introductory vision of the coming of New Heaven and New Earth (21:1-8), the New Jerusalem is portrayed in terms of the Holy of Holies (21:9-27) and the new Garden of Eden (22:1-5). The most significant appearance of the throne motif in chs. 21-22 is the double reference in the climactic scene of

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<sup>101</sup> Gieschen, "Lamb," 236-37. Gieschen views the concluding statement of ch. 7 as a strong indication of the unity of God and the Lamb. He suggests that the impression from the syntax is that the concluding reference to God in the sentence ἐξαλείψει ὁ θεὸς πᾶν δάκρυον ἐκ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν (7:17) encompasses a reference both to "the One sitting on the throne" (7:15) and "the Lamb in the midst of the throne" (7:17). This exegetical alternative should not be discounted, but it lacks the support of compelling evidence.

<sup>102</sup> William J. Dumbrell (*The End of the Beginning: Revelation 21-22 and the Old Testament* [The Moore College Lectures; Homebush West: Lancer Books, 1985]) convincingly argues that Rev. 21-22 is constructed to demonstrate the fulfilment of the major ideas of salvation history. He traces the historical development of the themes of New Jerusalem, new temple, new covenant, new Israel and new creation, pointing out how they climax in the New Jerusalem vision. As Dumbrell demonstrates, the vision appears not only as an appropriate way to finish the book of Revelation, but also as a grandiose conclusion of the entire Bible's story-line.

the vision (22:1, 3) which provides the clearest statements in the book about the joint occupation of the divine throne on the part of God and the Lamb.

### 3.1. Contextual and Structural Considerations

The phrase ἔδειξέν μοι (“showed me”) in 22:1 clearly indicates the beginning of a new section (22:1-5), similar to 21:9-10. While in 21:9-17 “the bride. . . the Holy City” is revealed, the attention shifts in 22:1-5 to the regained Eden. There is no unanimity concerning the relation of 22:1-5 to the rest of the vision. Rissi, following Lohmeyer, marks off the section as an independent vision, basing his argument on the structuring formula, the repetitions from ch. 21 and the introduction of the new imagery of Paradise.<sup>103</sup> Similarly, Aune objects that the use of Paradise imagery does not cohere particularly well with the earlier description of the New Jerusalem as an enormous cube.<sup>104</sup> On the other hand, Fekkes questions the conclusion of Rissi and offers an argument in favor of the thematic unity of 21:22-22:5 based on the use of Isa. 60:19 in *inclusio* fashion in 21:23 and 22:5a.<sup>105</sup> In line with Fekkes, Mathewson observes repetition of a number of significant ideas in 22:1-5 from the preceding section, which indicates continuity according to his interpretation.<sup>106</sup>

The vision of 22:1-5 is best regarded as the conclusion to all of ch. 21. It seems that the purpose of adding fresh imagery lies in generating a sense of climax. The focus is on what stands at the center of the city: the worshiping community’s source of life. Thus, 22:1-5 is a new section contiguous with the previous descriptions, but it also introduces fresh imagery for depicting a new aspect of life in the New Jerusalem. The developments in this section clearly reveal rhetorical and thematic progress.<sup>107</sup> The centrality of the throne motif in 22:1-5 significantly contributes to the climactic tone not only of the vision of chs. 21-22, but the

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<sup>103</sup> Mathias Rissi, *The Future of the World: An Exegetical Study of Revelation 19.11-22.15* (SBT, 2/23; London: SCM, 1972), 52f.

<sup>104</sup> Aune, *Revelation*, III, 1175.

<sup>105</sup> Jan Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation: Visionary Antecedents and their Development* (JSNTSup, 93; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 98-99.

<sup>106</sup> Similarly to Fekkes, David Mathewson (*A New Heaven and a New Earth: The Meaning and Function of the Old Testament in Revelation 21.1-22.5* [JSNTSup, 238; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003], 186) refers to the presence of Isa. 60:19 in both 21:23-26 and 22:5 as a link between the two sections. He notes that the shared background of the sections is the description of the temple in Ezek. 47, the use of the number twelve (21:12-14; 22:2) and the “street” (21:21; 22:2).

<sup>107</sup> Mathewson, *New Heaven*, 187.

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entire book. Moreover, it suggests an *inclusio* with the opening throne scene (chs. 4-5), which sets the throne in the focus of attention as the central motif in the book of Revelation.

### 3.2. Background

There is a consensus that the Garden of Eden tradition forms the primary background of 22:1-5. While it is well known that different Jewish and early Christian eschatological conceptions draw on Garden of Eden imagery in the same way as John does,<sup>108</sup> it is often assumed that John's vision is primarily modeled on Ezekiel's utilization of the creation narrative in Ezek. 47:1-12.<sup>109</sup> I hold that the combined influence of Genesis' Garden of Eden tradition and Ezekiel's utilization of it most appropriately explains the imagery of Rev. 22:1-5.

The influence of Ezekiel's vision is regularly dealt with in the scholarly literature on the topic; however, the examination of the parallels with the creation-fall narrative of Genesis is very often neglected.<sup>110</sup> To address this need I suggest five parallels in this regard. First, the river of the water of life (ποταμὸς ὕδατος ζωῆς) alludes to the river flowing out of Eden (Gen. 2:10; ποταμός). Second, the tree of life appears in both contexts (ξύλον ζωῆς in Rev. 22:2; ξύλον τῆς ζωῆς in Gen. 2:9).<sup>111</sup> Third, the curse (κατάθεμα) is

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<sup>108</sup> For the comprehensive treatment of the topic in the Old Testament, see Terje Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2-3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature* (CBET, 25; Leuven: Peeters, 2000). For Jewish literature and early Christian interpretations, see Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, *Paradise Interpreted: Representation of Biblical Paradise in Judaism and Christianity* (Themes in Biblical Narrative: Jewish and Christian Traditions, 2; Leiden: Brill, 1999); Markus Bockmuehl and Guy G. Stroumsa eds., *Paradise in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Views* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>109</sup> E.g. Steve Moyise, *Old Testament in the Book of Revelation* (JSNTSup, 115; Sheffield: JSOT, 1995), 81; Beale, *Revelation*, 1103.

<sup>110</sup> Such omission is shown e.g. in Mathewson, *New Heaven*, 187f.; Pilchan Lee, *The New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation: A Study of Revelation 21-22 in the Light of its Background in Jewish Tradition* (WUNT, 2/129; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 289-92; J. Comblin, "La liturgie de la Nouvelle Jérusalem (Apoc XXI,1-XXII,5)," *ETL* 29 (1953), 5-40(17-20).

<sup>111</sup> The translation of ξύλον ζωῆς in Rev. 22:2 has attracted some discussion. While the form in 22:2 is singular, a common tendency is to understand it in a collective sense ("trees") (e.g. Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 765; Charles, *Revelation*, II, 176; Bratcher, *Handbook on the Revelation*, 312). On the other hand, the translation as a plural has been criticized e.g. in Édouard Delebecque, "Où situer l'Arbre de vie dans la Jérusalem céleste? Note sur Apocalypse XXII, 2," *RevThom* 88 (1988), 124-30.

banished from the New Jerusalem, while in the fall narrative it appears as a consequence of the sin (ἐπικατάρατος; Gen. 3:14, 17). Fourth, the promise of seeing God's face reflects the undoing of the fall's consequence of banishment from the divine presence (Gen. 3:23). Fifth, the elect's reign (βασιλεύσουσιν; Rev. 22:5) reflects Adam's original commission to rule over the created world (ἄρχετε; Gen. 1:28). The five suggested allusions do not have equal strength. Whereas the first two are supported by verbal parallels, the other three reflect only thematic correspondence. John does not identify the new creation with the Garden of Eden, but describes the New Jerusalem in the language of Paradise. Such an approach is not new, since in the Old Testament and particularly in the Jewish apocalyptic literature the Garden of Eden imagery and the motif of eschatological temple/city appear as closely related.<sup>112</sup>

The intertextual relation with Ezek. 47:1-12 is also striking. Vanhoye suggests the following parallels: the river flowing out, the tree(s) on either side of the river, the production of fruit and leaves for healing.<sup>113</sup> On the other hand, numerous discontinuities have been also observed with Ezekiel's imagery: the river *of life*; the river flows *from the throne through the city*; the tree *of life*; the tree apparently stands *in the midst* of the street; the tree produces *twelve* fruits; the healing is for the *nations*.<sup>114</sup>

For the sake of our research it is significant to note the fundamental difference between Revelation's, Ezekiel's and Genesis' designation of the river's source. In Genesis the river starts from Eden and it is divided into four branches (Gen. 2:10). On the other hand, in Ezekiel it issues from the temple and runs to the Dead Sea (Ezek. 47:8-9). In contrast, in Rev. 22:1-5 the throne of God and the Lamb is pictured as the source of the water of life, since their presence replaces the temple on the New Earth (21:22). This

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<sup>112</sup> For the comprehensive treatment of the question in the Old Testament, see Terje Stordalen, "Heaven on Earth—Or Not? Jerusalem as Eden in Biblical Literature" in *Beyond Eden: The Biblical Story of Paradise (Genesis 2-3) and its Reception History*, eds. Konrad Schmid and Christoph Riedweg (FAT 2/34; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 28-53. Just as it is stated that the earth shall return to a state of primeval chaos, the New Jerusalem is sometimes linked with Paradise itself, not just with the new creation (2Bar. 4:1-7; 1En. 90:33-36). In the description of the consummation of ages in *T. Dan* 5:12 Eden and New Jerusalem are set in a parallel: "Saints shall refresh themselves in Eden, the righteous shall rejoice in the New Jerusalem." It is also said that Paradise was sometimes hidden only to be revealed in the future (2Bar. 59:8; 4Ezra 7:123; 8:52; 2En. 8:1-6).

<sup>113</sup> Albert Vanhoye, "L'utilisation du livre d'Ezéchiel dans l'Apocalypse," *Bib* 43 (1962), 436-77(470-71).

<sup>114</sup> Mathewson, *New Heaven*, 188.

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variety reveals that though John creatively utilized the traditions of Genesis and Ezekiel, his description is distinctive.<sup>115</sup>

### 3.3. Interpretation

While Rev. 22:1-5 is a textual unit which utilizes the Garden of Eden imagery, there is a shift of tenses in the description. The present participle verbs of the first two verses (ἐκπορευόμενον, ποιῶν and ἀποδιδόν) are followed by a series of future verbs in 22:3-5 (ἔσται, λατρεύουσιν, φωτίσει and βασιλεύουσιν). Aune explains the change as an indication that the author has shifted from describing his visionary experience to a prophetic scenario expected to take place.<sup>116</sup> Nevertheless, the throne appears in both contexts as the joint throne of God and the Lamb, I suggest, with two different theological meanings.

#### 3.3.1. The Throne as the Source of Life

In the concluding vision of the book of Revelation the throne is pictured as the focal point of the new creation. It functions as a life-giving source in 22:1-2 from which wells up the river of the water of life that runs through the city watering the tree of life.<sup>117</sup> Thus, the throne is closely related to two life-images: the “water of life” (ὕδωρ ζωῆς) and the “tree of life” (ξύλον ζωῆς). These images are also juxtaposed in 1QH 8:5-7 and they are found in Hellenistic descriptions of the afterlife.<sup>118</sup> Bauckham notes that appearing together they “represent the food and drink of eschatological life” which come from God “who is himself the life of the new creation.”<sup>119</sup> Thus, God’s presence mediated through these images of life embodies life in its fullest sense, the “life which is eternal because it is immediately joined to

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<sup>115</sup> For discernible patterns in John’s reinterpretation of Ezek. 40-48, see Jeffrey Marshall Vogelgesang, “Interpretation of Ezekiel in the Book of Revelation” (Ph.D. Dissertation; Harvard University, 1985), 113-31.

<sup>116</sup> Aune, *Revelation*, III, 1178.

<sup>117</sup> Several MSS (1611<sup>s</sup> 2329 pc) suggest τοῦ στόματος (“out of mouth”) instead of τοῦ θρόνου as the source of the water. Beale (*Revelation*, 1105-06) notes that the στόματος reading fits into John’s style, because ἐκπορεύομαι (“proceed”) occurs five times as part of clauses with ἐκ τοῦ στόματος. Nevertheless, the variant τοῦ θρόνου is preferred, because it is supported by a large amount of good quality external evidence.

<sup>118</sup> Ps.-Plato, *Axiochus* 371c.

<sup>119</sup> Bauckham, *Theology*, 133.



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its eternal source in God.”<sup>120</sup> The entire picture conveys the impression of the “fructification of the new cosmos.”<sup>121</sup>

It is stated in 22:1, 3 that the divine throne is occupied jointly by God and the Lamb (ὁ θρόνος τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἀρνίου). This is the third context in the visionary section of the book in which the Lamb is pictured on the throne and at the same time it is the clearest statement of the shared occupancy. Whereas in 5:6 and 7:17 the Lamb’s and the Father’s occupation of the throne are separately stated within the same contexts, in the concluding vision of the book they are finally pictured as juxtaposed, sitting together as equal occupants of the same divine throne. Hengel calls our attention to the increasing precision of Revelation’s author in defining the communality of the throne throughout the book that reaches complete clarity in 22:1-5.<sup>122</sup> The concluding scene also encapsulates the climactic Christological message of the book, since sharing the throne between God and the Lamb on equal terms implies the notions of divine unity and shared sovereignty.<sup>123</sup>

The vision of the joint throne of God and the Lamb in the eschatological Garden of Eden setting emanates a rhetorical energy which makes it a fitting conclusion of the book’s visionary part.<sup>124</sup> It has been rightly concluded by Deutsch that: “Paradise is, of course, the symbol of primeval completeness, a completeness which follows the defeat of the

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<sup>120</sup> Bauckham, *Theology*, 141.

<sup>121</sup> Beale, *Revelation*, 1107. Beale (*The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* [NSBT, 17; Leicester: Apollos; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004], 313-34) argues that the paradise temple of Rev. 21-22 encompasses the entire geography of the new creation. He views the “rationale for the world-encompassing nature of the paradisaal temple . . . in the ancient notion that the Old Testament temple was a microcosmic model of the entire heaven and earth.”

<sup>122</sup> Hengel, *Studies*, 151.

<sup>123</sup> The divine unity is further highlighted in chs. 21-22 by the statement that both God and the Lamb form one temple (21:22) and the shared title Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὠ (21:6; 22:13; cf. 1:8). Also, the employment of a singular possessive pronoun such as applied at the same time both to God and the Lamb serves the same purpose: δοῦλοι αὐτοῦ (22:3), λατρεύουσιν αὐτῷ (22:3), πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ (22:4) and ὄνομα αὐτοῦ (22:4).

<sup>124</sup> Grant Macaskill (“Paradise in the New Testament” in *Paradise in Antiquity*, eds. Markus Bockmuehl and Guy G. Stroumsa, 64-81[78]) suggests that the river of life is the representation of the Spirit in the throne scene of 22:1-5 and the image functions as “a symbol of the fellowship with the triune God that is mediated by the Holy Spirit.” He concludes that the throne in New Jerusalem is the throne of a triune God. While no strong evidence supports this hypothesis and the background in the Paradise tradition is against such symbolical interpretation, Macaskill’s suggestion deserves a further investigation.

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waters of chaos. Thus, it is only fitting that the perfection of a restored or new order be symbolized by the image of Paradise. End-time has become primeval time, assuring communities under crisis of the ultimate victory of life and order.”<sup>125</sup>

The final visionary scene also settles the question of power which is the central issue in the book. It portrays the victorious side of the cosmic conflict, the legitimate occupants of the throne, but at the same time it underscores the fundamental difference between the nature of God’s rule and the rule of the earthly powers. Whereas the beast’s regime is self-fulfilling and life-denying, God’s reign is life giving because it seeks the welfare of his creation.<sup>126</sup>

#### 3.3.2. The Cultic-Governmental Center of the New Creation

In the section of the concluding vision with the series of verbs in the future tense (22:3-5) the throne of God and the Lamb is portrayed as the cultic-governmental centre of the new creation around which all activity revolves. Though Aune holds that the repeated reference to the throne in 22:3 is “somewhat redundant” after 22:1,<sup>127</sup> I would like to suggest that the author’s decision reflects intentionality. Namely, the function of the throne in 22:3-5 is nuanced from its theological meaning in 22:1-2 discussed above. Similar to the throne-room vision in chs. 4-5, the throne appears in 22:3-5 in a blended cultic and political function and it is deliberately freed of all the association of human rule.<sup>128</sup>

The New Jerusalem appears in chs. 21-22 as a city of kingly–priestly character.<sup>129</sup> As the seat of the divine kingdom it houses the throne as its “main quality,”<sup>130</sup> the symbol of the ruling authority of God and the Lamb. The fact that a divine throne is present in the city expresses the idea that the political structure of the new creation is theocracy, a veritable kingdom of God.<sup>131</sup> On the other hand, the New Jerusalem is pictured also as the

<sup>125</sup> Celia Deutsch, “Transformation of Symbols: The New Jerusalem in Rv 21:1–22:5,” *ZNW* 78 (1987), 106-26(117).

<sup>126</sup> Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed*, 73.

<sup>127</sup> Aune, *Revelation*, III, 1179.

<sup>128</sup> Mathewson, *New Heaven*, 204.

<sup>129</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Priester für Gott: Studien zum Herrschafts- und Priestermotiv in der Apokalypse* (NTAbh, 7; Münster: Aschendorff, 1972), 352.

<sup>130</sup> Paul Spilsbury, *The Throne, the Lamb & the Dragon: A Reader’s Guide to the Book of Revelation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 148.

<sup>131</sup> Bruce J. Malina, *The New Jerusalem in the Revelation of John: The City as Symbol of Life with God* (Zacchaeus Studies; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 62.

eschatological Holy of Holies, filled by God's immediate presence. The need for any temple building ceases, since the divine presence is unrestricted (21:22). The theocentricity, strongly emphasized in Rev. 4-5, is in focus again in the description of the eschatological kingdom of God.<sup>132</sup> The location of the throne on earth implies the moving of the divine governmental center into a new context. The relocation from heaven to the new earth is made possible because of the permanent removal of any curse from the earth announced in 22:3 (πάν κατάθεμα οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι; "any curse there shall not be any more"). The exact meaning of κατάθεμα and the literary relationship of the mentioned phrase to the rest of the vision is an interpretive ambiguity closely related to the function of the throne. It is often assumed that the term refers to a cursed thing.<sup>133</sup> However, this is unlikely, since that would account for a mere repetition of the thought from 21:27. It is more appropriate to interpret κατάθεμα as designating the curse itself. As a translation of כרתה, it includes "the sense of the sacred ban placed by Yahweh on enemies of his rule, requiring that they be utterly destroyed."<sup>134</sup> The idea is employed in this sense in Zech. 14:11 (οὐκ ἔσται ἀνάθεμα ἔτι; "there will no longer be a curse"), a text which seems to be in the mind of Revelation's author, since it refers to the restoration of Jerusalem in the eschatological context.<sup>135</sup> As has been argued above, the reference is to be understood also against Gen. 3:17-19 and in that sense the allusion implies the restoration of the Edenic conditions.

The removing of the curse makes possible the dissolution of all the distance between the occupants of the throne and the created world. The unrestricted approach to the divine throne is closely related to the promise of seeing God's face (22:4) and reflects the successful undoing of the consequences of a human rebellion in the Garden of Eden.<sup>136</sup> This scene of

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<sup>132</sup> Bauckham, *Theology*, 140.

<sup>133</sup> E.g. Swete, *Apocalypse*, 296; Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 332; Bratcher, *Handbook on the Revelation*, 313.

<sup>134</sup> Bauckham, *Climax*, 316.

<sup>135</sup> The terminological difference between κατάθεμα (Rev. 22:3) and ἀνάθεμα (Zech. 14:11) is not decisive, for both verbs are a legitimate rendering of כרתה. Aune (*Revelation*, III, 1179) argues against the same background claiming that κατάθεμα refers specifically to "the curse of war." However, this interpretation is too narrow. It is more appropriate to view destruction as the effect of the ban, as Bauckham regards the total destruction of Babylon in Rev. 18:2 "the effect of the ban on her" (Bauckham, *Climax*, 318).

<sup>136</sup> The idea of seeing God's face reflects full awareness of the presence and power of God in biblical literature (Job 33:36; Ps. 10:11; 17:15; 3Jn 11). It also appears often as an eschatological blessing (Ps. 84:7; Mt. 5:8; Heb. 12:14; 1Jn 3:2; *Jub.* 1:28; *4Ezra* 7:91, 98;

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immediate access to the divine throne is in contrast to the limited approach to God in the throne-room vision of chs. 4-5 in which his face cannot be seen by humanity and even the heavenly beings form inner circles (the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders).<sup>137</sup> The explanation for the contrast between the different manifestations of divine sovereignty lies in the issue of presence and absence of sin in the universe. However, in the final throne scene of Revelation the sin is past and the divine sovereignty meets unrestrictedly with human freedom at the throne.

Besides the function of symbolizing the divine ruling presence in the new order, the throne motif also reflects cultic aspects. The community of the redeemed is pictured in 22:1-5 in a dual priestly-royal role. The motif of priesthood surfaces in the use of the cultic term λατρεύω (22:3) and in the idea of access to God's presence. In this regard, also significant is the expression τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων αὐτῶν ("his name will be on their foreheads"; 22:4), which recalls the inscription "Holy to the Lord" engraved on the golden plate of Aaron's turban (Exod. 28:36-38) pointing to unique status. The royal character of the community merges with the cultic aspects, since the terms βασιλεύω and λατρεύω designate roles simultaneously practiced by the elect. Though the idea of their reigning is not expressed by the throne motif in the final vision of Revelation, the application of βασιλεύω to the elect is to be understood as the climactic fulfilment of the promise in 3:21.<sup>138</sup> The dual function of the elect not only fulfils the priestly-royal promises of the programmatic statement of the exodus (Exod. 19:6), but at the same time it indicates the restoring of the ultimate value given to humanity in the Garden of Eden in Adam's kingly-priestly role.<sup>139</sup> Dumbrell rightly observes that the new community is the "legatee of all the promises given to national Israel. . . In these people all the symbolism of the Old Testament which emphasized Israel's function—covenant, land, temple, priesthood, kingship—has been gathered together."<sup>140</sup>

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*IEn.* 102:8).

<sup>137</sup> Bauckham, *Theology*, 142.

<sup>138</sup> The elect's reign is also anticipated in Dan. 7:18, 27 and Rev. 1:6; 5:10, where the idea of reigning appears without a direct reference to throne(s).

<sup>139</sup> For the priestly-kingly function of Adam in Eden as the first earthly sanctuary, see Gordon J. Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story" in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Division A: The Period of the Bible* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1986), 19-25.

<sup>140</sup> Dumbrell, *End of the Beginning*, 160.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this article three contexts have been investigated in Revelation in which the Lamb appears as sitting on the throne (5:6; 7:17; 22:1, 3). Whereas the idea of the Lamb's throne occupation is not disputed in 7:17 and 22:1, 3, scholarly opinion is sharply divided over the interpretation of 5:6. Even the proponents of the Lamb's throne occupation in ch. 5 justify their interpretation almost exclusively on the basis of the wider context of Christ's enthronement in the book. This article offered a detailed exegetical argument in favor of this position. An answer has been also suggested to the question of the Lamb's distance from the throne in the scene, generally avoided by the proponents of Christ's enthronement in ch. 5. I have argued that the solution for the problem of distance lies in interpreting 5:5-6 in terms of John's identification-description literary technique, which makes room for the possibility of chronological discontinuity between 5:6 and 5:7.

It has also been demonstrated that the Lamb's throne occupation is never separated from the Father's, since in all chapters in which the Lamb is on the throne, the Father appears also in the same role. The shared throne occupancy does not indicate a rivalry, but rather a shared authority and a close union that implies high Christology. Thus, the communality of the throne is defined in increasing precision throughout the book as it reaches its climax in the concluding scene of 22:1-5 in which God and the Lamb are clearly juxtaposed in the new creation context.

Two further conclusions emerge on the basis of our investigation which, I suggest, point in the direction of the throne motif's centrality in Revelation. First, it was demonstrated in my article on God's throne in Revelation ("Thrones in the Book of Revelation 1") that the major characters in Rev. 4 are all identified in their identification-description pattern in relation to the throne: God (4:2), the twenty-four elders (4:4) and the living creatures (4:6). This tendency continues in ch. 5, since the Lamb (5:6) and the host of angelic beings (5:11) are introduced similarly in terms of their relation to the throne. Thus, the identification-description literary technique brings the throne into focus as the point of interest and sets a pattern which is, I suggest, followed consistently throughout the book as discussed in regard to the elect in ch. 7. Second, the fact that the visionary part of Revelation starts with a throne scene (4:1-5:14) and also ends with a throne scene (22:1-5) suggests a throne *inclusio*. Significantly, in both scenes the Lamb appears in a major role. In the first vision he is enthroned, while in the last it is disclosed that he practices his ruling authority on equal

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terms with the Father. Thus, the book is framed by the throne motif and this *inclusio* points to the legitimacy of the divine rule in the universe.

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