

Jan Van Eyck



The Ghent Altarpiece

Natasha O'Hear- Contrasting Images of the Book of Revelation in Medieval and Early Modern Art

Jan Van Eyck- 1390-1441

Born in Netherlands

Only 25 works confidently attributed to him

Most of his art was done in the last decade of his life.

His brother helped him complete the Ghent Altarpiece.

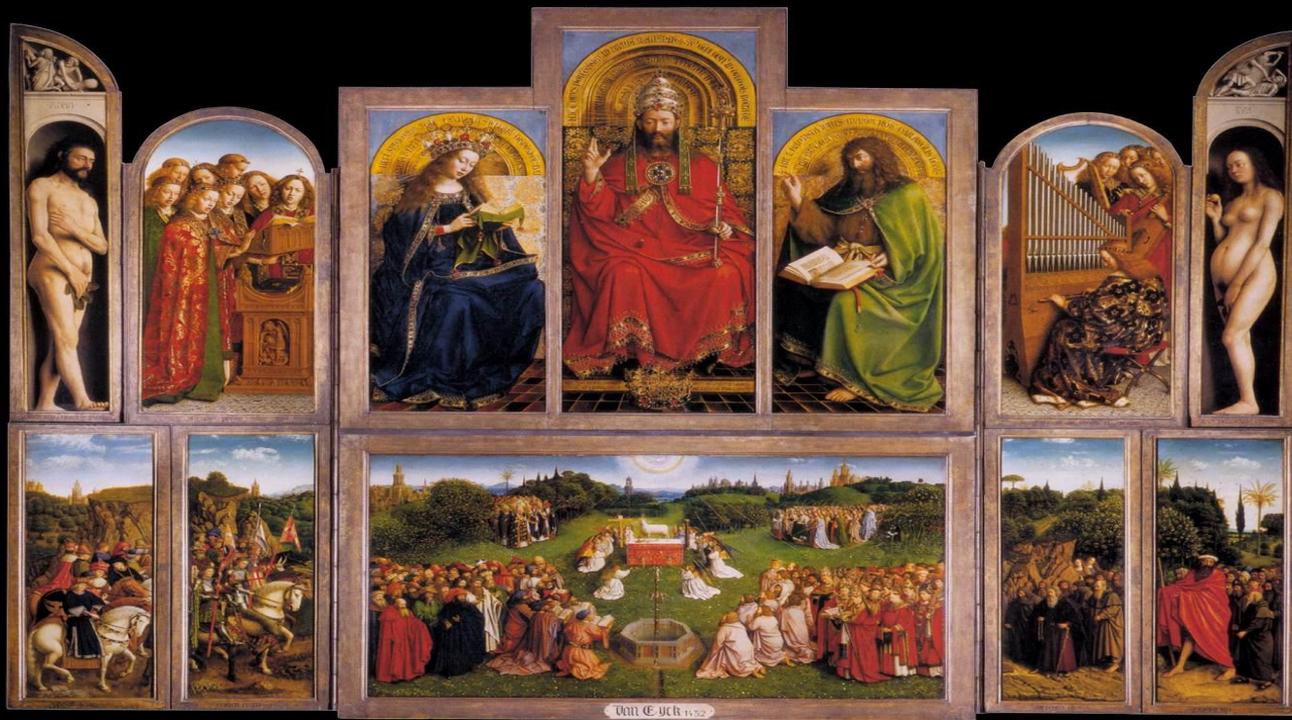
There is a total of twenty-four panels, fastened together through hinges

This hung in St. John's Cathedral, above the altar.

Given the time period, this work would be considered by some as ostentatious

The largest surviving European altarpiece known today





It is suggested that certain panels would be shut certain days to focus attention to different parts of the piece. Considering the veneration of saints, this suggestion seems warranted. In fact, 98 different ways to close/open this piece which coincides with the number of festivals in an Ecclesiastical Year

The bottom center panel is our current focus.

The Adoration of the Lamb



Connected to the Doctrine of Transubstantiation (Not the Passion, Annunciation, etc.) It connected the laymen to worship in a fresh way

Miracle of the Eucharist Eschatologically speaking

Jesus is a Lamb on an Altar, not a Throne

Only the saved are permitted to see and worship Him

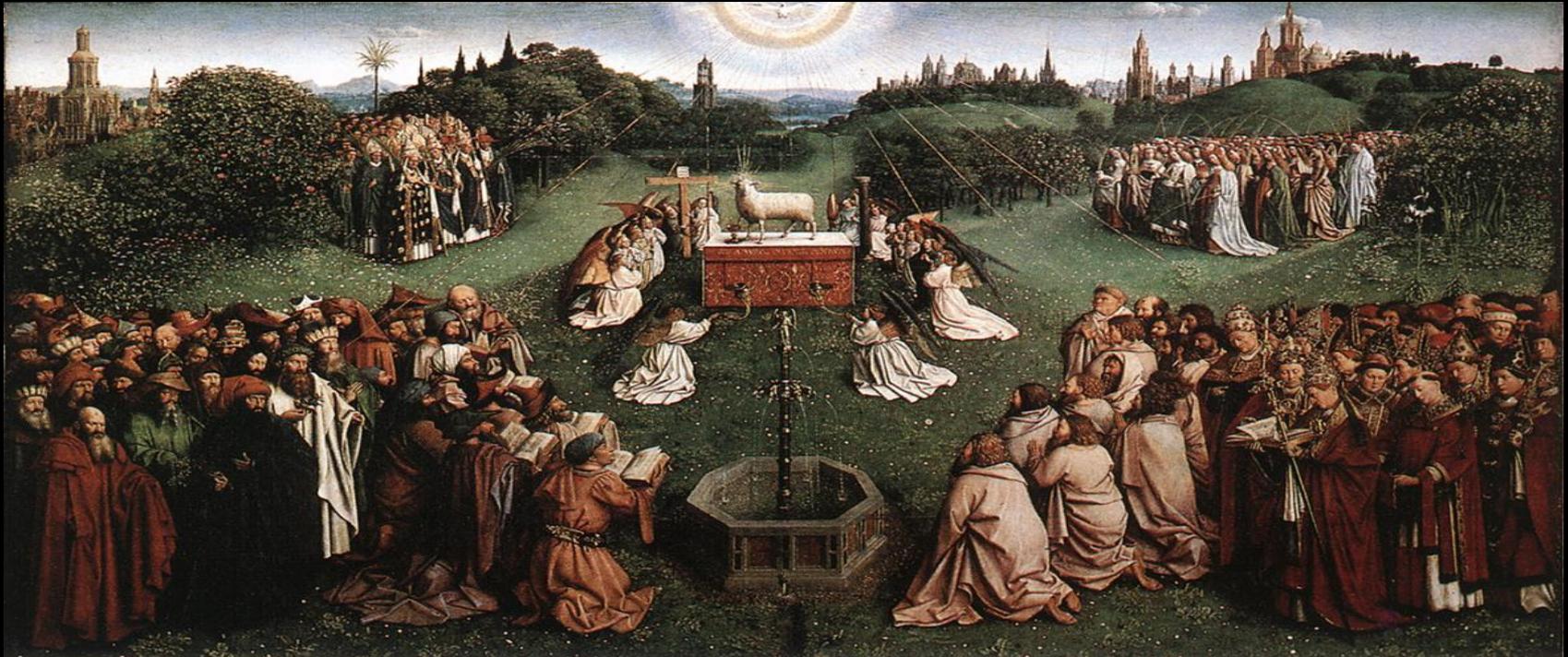
The fountain at the center can be interpreted as the River of Life



Building in the background are most likely the New Jerusalem. (Mimic Buildings found in Eyck's city)

The Holy Virgin Martyrs, Popes, Apostles, The Righteous, Angels, and the Church can all be seen.

How this one panel relates to the rest is most interesting





The Piece is top-heavy. This indicates that it's possible that this piece was not meant to be shown all at once.



The central focus is the Lamb- All other characters are pointing toward it
This shows its theological significance is on Salvation, particularly the Eucharist
It breaks with tradition by showing Heaven to be a New Eden.



Commission by Jodocus Vijd and his wife Elizabeth

Officially hung in St. John's Cathedral in 1432

It's 11ft by 15ft in dimension

When it's closed, it shows different pictures



Closed View: The Commissioners on the bottom, with St. John the Apostle and John the Evangelist, and the Annunciation to Mary on the top

Final Analysis

This piece of art should be seen didactically

With the Lamb being at the center, surrounded by elements found in Revelation and outside of the book show that this art was to not only bring someone to worship, but should teach them in the process. From seeing Adam and Eve on both corners and moving inward to the Father in Heaven, seated next to Mary and John finally looking down on the Lamb centers to viewer into a place of contemplation.

It tells the story of salvation from the beginning to end, where God's people will worship Him forever.