

CHAPTER 5





Understanding the Book of Revelation | Chapter 5

WITH PASTOR TOM



THE LION, THE LAMB, & THE SCROLL

One worthy to take the scroll.

Revelation 5:1:

And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

The focus of Revelation 4 was the throne – Here, John begins with reference to the throne, but now shifted his focus to the scroll held by the enthroned Lord.

Written inside and on the back: This means that this scroll was unusual. It wasn't common practice to write on both sides of the scroll.

Ancient scrolls were read horizontally, not vertically. The Book of Revelation would fill a scroll 15 feet (4.5 meters) long.

Sealed with seven seals: When a roll was finished, it was fastened with strings and the strings were sealed with wax at the knots.

Some think the scroll was the title deed to planet earth. This is an attractive idea, especially because the coming time of tribulation will end with Jesus ruling on earth. But it is hard to demonstrate this with certainty.

Roman law required a will to be sealed seven times as illustrated in the wills left by Augustus

The idea here is that God has a book in which the history of the universe is already written.

In the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll: Remember the emphasis is not on the content of the scroll, but on its seals and the One who is worthy to take it.

Revelation 5:2-4:

Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.

A strong angel: We don't know who this angel is. Many have suggested that it is Gabriel... but this angel issued a challenge to all creation: Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?

No one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. It was as if the strong angel looked through the entire universe to find someone worthy, and did not find anyone worthy to even look at the scroll.

There was no answer to the strong angel's challenge because the creation is utterly incapable of deciding or effecting its own destiny.

So I wept much: John wept because the consummation of history would now indefinitely postponed.

No one was found worthy and no creature was found worthy.

Revelation 5:5-7:

But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain,

having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

This One was the great figure of Old Testament prophecy: the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, Messiah of Israel and of the Gentiles.

And I looked, and behold... stood a Lamb: Because of the elder's announcement, John expected to see a Lion, but saw a Lamb instead.

The Lamb is presented in a way both sympathetic and powerful; He is living (stood a Lamb).

When men want symbols of power they conjure up ferocious beasts and birds of prey such as those that represent nations and sports teams. But the representative of the kingdom of heaven is a Lamb, representing humility, gentleness, and sacrificial love.

As it had been slain: The idea is that the sacrifice of Jesus is still fresh and current before God the Father.

Having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

What a figure! A slain Lamb, who has the marks of omniscience and omnipotence! Throughout the Scriptures, eyes suggest knowledge and wisdom, and horns suggest power.

The seven eyes of the LORD are a picture of omniscience drawn from the prophet Zechariah (Zechariah 4:10 and 3:9).

Revelation 5:8-10:

Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying:

“You are worthy to take the scroll,
And to open its seals;
For You were slain,
And have redeemed us to God by Your blood
Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,
And have made us kings and priests to our God;
And we shall reign on the earth.”

The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb:
When the Lamb took the scroll, the response was immediate. High-ranking angels and redeemed man joined to worship the Lamb.

Each having a harp: The harp - Worship in heaven is accompanied by music.

And golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints: With their golden bowls full of incense, the elders symbolically presented the prayers of the saints. However, they did not intercede for the saints, functioning as mediators for God’s people.

Golden bowls full of incense: In this we see how precious the prayers of the saints are to God. He regards them as a sweet smelling incense, as if set in precious golden bowls.

And they sang a new song: The elders sang a new song, for mercies that are forever new.

By a new song is either to be understood as an excellent song (for new songs were usually most valued).

You are worthy: In the days of the Apostle John, Roman Emperors were celebrated upon their arrival with the Latin expression *vere dignus*, which is translated You are worthy. Here the true Ruler of the world is honoured.

For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth:

The song honours the price of redemption: for You were slain.

The song honours the worker of redemption: have redeemed us.

The song honours the destination of redemption: have redeemed us to God.

The song honours the payment of redemption: by Your blood.

The song honours the scope of redemption: every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

The song honours the length of redemption: have made us kings and priests to our God.

The song honours the result of redemption: and we shall reign on the earth.

Kings and priests to our God: Believers are kings because of their royal birth and their destiny to reign with Jesus. They are priests because they need no mediator other than Jesus Himself.

Revelation 5:11-12:

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice:

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain

To receive power and riches and wisdom,
And strength and honour and glory and blessing!”

I heard the voice of many angels around the throne: The angels and the elders fell down before the Lamb together (Revelation 5:8). Then, the voice of many angels around the throne rose up with the praise of the Great Redeemer.

The number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands: This is an innumerable company of angels.

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain: In their song, the angels did not offer praise for their redemption. This is because angels are not (to the best of our knowledge) subjects of this redemption but they are careful observers of it, and are therefore able to praise God because of it.

The angels can clearly see the greatness of God’s work in redeeming fallen men, so in response they credit power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honour and glory and blessing to the Lamb. In the same way, we can praise God for the way He works in the lives of other people.

Revelation 5:13-14:

And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying:

“Blessing and honour and glory and power

Be to Him who sits on the throne,

And to the Lamb, forever and ever!”

Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

Every creature: John couldn’t be any more complete in his description. Truly, this is every creature.

Blessing and honour and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb: This combined worship of the Father and the Lamb is strong testimony to the deity of Jesus.

Now if Jesus Christ were not properly God this would be idolatry, as it would be giving to the creature what belongs to the Creator.

Fell down and worshipped Him: The ancient Greek word for worshipped is literally “to prostrate” or “to lay before another in complete submission.” The scene may be that the elders fell down to their knees, then laid themselves before Him who lives forever and ever as an expression of their total submission and worship.

Forever and ever... worshipped Him who lives forever and ever: The living God reigns eternally. The Caesars come and go, including those who persecute God’s people. But the Lord God lives forever and ever and is ever worthy of our praise.