

Valley Bible Church – Book of Revelation

"The Lamb & The Seven Sealed Scroll"

Revelation 5:1-14

This particular section can be divided into 3 sections.

The focus of John changes from the throne and all that is around it to a seven sealed scroll held by the One sitting on the throne. The chapter is centered on finding the one who is worthy to open this seven sealed scroll. So the divisions are: The Search for the Worthy One, The Selection of the Worthy One, & The Songs to the Worthy One.

The Search for the Worthy One: 5:1-4

The Seven Sealed Scroll:

The Greek word for book here is *biblion* which is not referring to a book as we know it today. It was a scroll. A scroll was made up of a long piece of papyrus or treated animal skin (parchment) and rolled up from both ends. Scrolls of those days averaged about 15 feet in length. John informs us that it had writing on both sides. "It was common in the first century for a person in authority to seal an important document so that its contents would remain secret. Roman law required a last will and testament to be sealed seven times, as illustrated in the wills of Caesar Augustus and Emperor Vespasian."²¹⁵ "Such documents were sealed with wax or clay and could be opened only by a qualified person."²¹⁶ "This kind of contract was known all over the Middle East in ancient times and was used by the Romans from the time of Nero on. The full contract would be written on the inner pages and described briefly on the outside. All kinds of transactions were consummated this way, including marriage-contracts, rental and lease agreements, release of slaves, contract-bills, and bonds. Support comes also from Hebrew practices. The Hebrew document most closely resembling this scroll was a title-deed that was folded and signed, requiring at least three witnesses. A portion of the text would be written, folded over and sealed, with a different witness signing at each fold. A larger number of witnesses meant that more importance was assigned to the document."²¹⁷ "The scroll John saw in god's hand is the title deed to the earth which He will give to Christ. Unlike other such deeds, however, it does not record the descriptive detail of what Christ will inherit, but rather how He will regain His rightful inheritance. He will do so by means of the divine judgments about to be poured out on the earth (6:12ff.). Ezekiel describes this same scroll in his vision of heaven: 'Then I looked, and behold, a hand was extended to me; and lo, a scroll was in it. When He spread it out before me, it was written on the front and back, and written on it were lamentations, mourning and woe' (Ezek. 2:9-10)."²¹⁸ "It reveals the judgments of God to be poured out on the earth, Christ's Second Coming to rightfully inherit and implement the title deed of redemption to planet Earth, and His righteous rule in the Millennial Kingdom."²¹⁹

The Strong Angel & his Proclamation:

Some have tried to identify the strong angel as the angel Gabriel using references such as Daniel 8:16, 9:21; and Luke 1:26. Others have tried to identify him as the archangel Michael since he is to play some sort of a role in end time events (Daniel 12:1-3). It is important to note that the text **does not** identify the angel. The name of the angel must remain anonymous to us.

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The angel is said to be proclaiming with a loud voice. "The loud sound of the angel's voice, vibrating throughout heaven, denotes authority, urgency, and the importance of what he is about to announce."²²⁰ This angel's proclamation is in the form of a question. "*Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?*" John MacArthur paraphrases this question well in his commentary on Revelation 1-11 where he says, "Who, he asked, has the innate, virtuous worthiness or character and the divine right that would qualify him to break the seven seals?" It was time for God's judgment to be poured out upon the earth and that judgment was the bulk of the material written in the scroll. In order for this scroll to be opened and the judgment to be poured out a worthy one needed to be found to break the seals. A problem ensued as no created being was found who could break the seals and open the scroll. A search of the entire universe revealed that no one was able to open the scroll. There was none of God's creation who was worthy of character or divine right who could break those seals and look into the contents of the scroll.

The Sorrow of John:

John was greatly distressed over the fact that no one could be found in the entire created universe who was worthy to open the scroll. John's response was a sorrowful one. "Weep is from *klaio*, the same word used to describe Jesus' weeping over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41), and Peter's bitter weeping after betraying the Lord (Luke 22:62). It is thus a word that expresses strong, unrestrained emotion."²²¹ "This implies that John continually wailed in an uncontrollable, loud voice."²²² John's weeping was genuine sorrow which he expressed because of the moral inability of mankind to open the scroll, and the fact that the world would not know the contents of the scroll. As it turns out, John's extreme sorrow and uncontrollable wailing was a bit premature.

The Selection of the Worthy One: 5:5-7

Here in this section is the identification of the worthy one. There was none of God's creation who was capable to open the scroll, neither man nor angel. However it is here where John is told to stop weeping as the worthy one emerges on to the scene. This worthy one is described by three different titles:

The Lion from the tribe of Judah:

This looks back to Jacob's blessing on the tribe of Judah as recorded in Genesis 49:8-10. Judah was described as a lion like tribe in which a strong and fierce ruler would come. This is obviously a prophecy of the Messiah. Jesus Christ descended from the tribe of Judah (Matthew 1:2, Hebrews 7:14). It is now in Revelation 5 where Christ's lion like judgment begins to unfold.

The Root of David:

This is a second messianic title ascribed to the worthy one. It finds its source in Isaiah 11:1 & 10, linking Christ to the Davidic line. Matthew 1 and Luke 3 both reveal that Jesus is a descendant of David both on His mother's and father's side. Paul affirms in Romans 1:3 that Jesus was born a descendant of David. The term "Son of David" is frequently used throughout the Gospels to refer to Jesus. Jesus is the rightful king from the tribe of Judah and the line of David. Jesus is the worthy one. "At the cross He defeated sin (Rom. 8:3), death (Heb. 2:14-15), and all the forces of hell (Col. 2:15, 1 Pet. 3:19). Believers are overcomers through His overcoming (Col. 2:13-14, 1 John 5:5)."²²³

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The Lamb:

The third identification of the worthy one is given by John as he looks and sees a lamb standing before the throne. This lamb is once again a reference to Jesus Christ. The New Testament recognized Christ as the ultimate sacrificial lamb (cf. John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32; 1 Peter 1:19). In these four passages Christ is referred to as a lamb. In revelation Christ is referred to as a lamb 31 times. John then gives us several features of Christ the Lamb:

Standing: He is not standing on the throne at His Father's right side but is standing between the throne and the elders. He has stepped down and moved in front of the throne to receive the scroll from God the Father.

As if Slain: There existed visible scars upon this Lamb as if He had been slain, yet He was alive. 1 Peter 1:19 pictures Christ as the slain lamb. Jesus Christ was the ultimate sacrificial lamb put to death on a cross. He now possesses the scars from that sacrifice however He raised from the dead and is alive.

Seven horns and seven eyes: The seven horns represent imagery drawn from the animal world and symbolizes strength and power. Seven is a number of perfection. As is used here the 7 horns emphasize Christ's **Omnipotence**. The seven eyes are described as the seven spirits of God. This as we have mentioned before is a reference to the fullness of the Holy Spirit and here emphasizes Christ's **Omniscience**. Sent out into all the earth describes the roll of the Holy Spirit in searching throughout the earth for guilty unrepentant sinners to be judged and here emphasizes Christ's **Omnipresence**. It is at this point where the Lamb having been found worthy comes and takes the scroll from the hand of Him who sat on the throne. The Lamb has the virtuous worthiness of character as well as the divine right which qualifies Him as the worthy one.

The Songs to the Worthy One: 5:8-14

It is at this point when the Lamb takes the scroll that worship resumes in heaven. This begins what I call movement #2 The Hymns of Redemption. This is a continuation of the worship from Revelation 4.

HYMN #3: The Hymn of Redemption:

Remember that Hymn #1 began with just the 4 living beings, Hymn #2 the 24 elders joined in and now notice that the elders now have added harps to their worship. "Harps were used in the Old Testament (Psalm 33:2, 98:5, 147:7etc.....) to offer praise and adoration to God."²²⁴ The golden bowls of incense represented the prayers of the saints. "These were wide-mouthed bowls used in the tabernacle and the temple where they symbolized the priestly work of intercession for the people (cf. 1 Kings 7:40, 45, 50; 2 Kings 12:13-14; 1 Chron. 28:17; Jer. 52:19; Zech. 14:20)."²²⁵ Also remember that Hymns #1 & 2 were directed at the One sitting on the throne while the next 2 hymns the worship is directed toward the Lamb. Notice that the Lamb is proclaimed worthy to open the scroll based upon His great sacrifice. His being slain was the substitutionary and sacrificial death of Christ. Christ's death paid the ransom price to purchase men from every tribe, tongue, people and nation. "Purchased is from *agorazo*, a rich New Testament word for redemption that pictures slaves purchased in the market place and then set free. At the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ paid the purchase price (His own blood; 1 Peter 1:18-19) to redeem men from every tribe (descent) and

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tongue (language) and people (race) and nation (culture) from the slave market of sin (cf. 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; Gal. 3:13)."²²⁶ At this point the song moves on to express the results of redemption. "The redeemed are part of God's Kingdom, a community of believers under God's sovereign rule. They are also priests to our God, signifying their complete access to God's presence for worship and service. The present priesthood of believers (1 Pet. 2:5,9) foreshadows that future day when we will have total access to and perfect communion with God."²²⁷

HYMN #4: The Hymn of Worthiness:

At this point John notices the voices of many angels joining in on the heavenly chorus. The number of these angels that joined in was innumerable. The Greek term for myriad means 10,000 and was the largest number for which they had a term. The phrase myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands was the way to express an uncountable host. This vast heavenly host burst into song "saying with a loud voice" which is best understood as nearly shouting. They proclaim the Lamb to be worthy and the worthiness of the Lamb is once again attributed to His providing perfect redemption through His death. Power, riches, wisdom, might, honor, glory, and blessing are ascribed to the Lamb. Jesus is truly deserving of all honor, glory, blessing and praise.

HYMN # 5: The Hymn of Blessing & Praise:

"As the great hymn of praise reaches a crescendo, every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them join in. This all-inclusive statement is reminiscent of Psalm 69:34: *'Let heaven and earth praise Him, the seas and everything that moves in them,'* and the concluding verse of the Psalms, *'Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!'* (Ps. 150:6). This mighty chorus cries out, *'To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.'* Endless blessing, endless honor, endless praise, endless glory, and endless worship belong to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."²²⁸ It is at this point that the 4 living beings continually repeat the word "Amen." Once again the elders fall down in reverent worship. The world is now on the verge of God's divine judgment ready to be poured out during the tribulation period of Revelation 6-18.