

Revelation Chapter 5

Revelation chapter 5 continues the vision of chapter 4. The “book” is a scroll with seven messages, each of which has been “sealed” with the authority of God. The breaking of the seals would reveal the message inside each part of the scroll. Scrolls normally had writing on only one side. This scroll contains the Tribulation judgments of God (compare chapter 6, Ezek. 2:9-10; Dan. 8:26; 12:4).

Revelation 5:1 "And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals."

“Written within and on the backside”: This is typical of various kinds of contracts in the ancient world, including deeds, marriage contracts, rental and lease agreements, and wills. The inside of the scroll contained all the details of the contract, and the outside, or back, contained a summary of the document. In this case, it almost certainly is a deed, the title deed to the earth (compare Jer. 32:7).

“Sealed with seven seals”: Romans sealed their wills 7 times on the edge at each roll, to prevent unauthorized entry. Hebrew title deeds required a minimum of 3 witnesses and 3 separate seals, with more important transactions requiring more witnesses and seals.

We are not told specifically anywhere what this book contains. This is one of the mysteries that will remain until we are in heaven with Him and ask Him face to face. We know that the Right Hand of God is Jesus Christ, so whatever this book is, (actually the book is a scroll that is rolled up and sealed), Jesus is holding it. This book that is filled to overflowing and has something even on the back could mean the fullness of time. Perhaps on the reverse side would be "it is finished" or "the end".

"Sealed with seven seals" just means that it is closed in completeness. These seals could be opened one at a time or all at once. They perhaps, if opened one at a time, could reveal a portion each time a seal is removed.

Verses 2-4: Only one with the proper authority could “open the book”, by loosing or removing its “seals” (compare Isa. 29:11). The question is, “Who has the right to judge the World” That is, to reveal what is hidden in the scroll and to execute what is written. “No man,” literally, “No one”, could be found among mankind or angels who had the authority to remove the “seals” and read the scroll.

Revelation 5:2 "And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?"

“Strong angel”: The identity of this angel is uncertain, but it may refer to the angel Gabriel, whose name means “strength of God” (Daniel 8:16).

I believe the reason a "strong angel" is mentioned here is to show that all the earthly and heavenly strength, aside from God's, cannot open this book or these seals.

The "loud voice" is as if the angel is calling out to see who will come forth to open the book.

Revelation 5:3 "And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon."

“In heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth”: A common biblical expression denoting the entire universe and not intended to teach 3 precise divisions.

There are some things that man cannot do. This one statement here shows that Jesus was, and is, no mere man. This says regardless of where he is located, man does not possess the power to open this book. There are some things, like judgment, that are reserved for Jesus to do.

The seven-sealed scroll is thought to be the title deed to the earth. In Practical terms, it seems God the Father holds this title deed, awaiting the return of His Son, Jesus Christ, to the earth. This powerful scene in heaven indicates that only Christ, who died to redeem mankind back to God, is qualified to open the seals of this scroll and claim His kingdom over all the earth.

The question is, "Who has the right to judge the world?" That is to reveal what is hidden in the scroll and to execute what is written. No man, literally "no one" could be found among mankind or angels who had the authority to remove the "seals", and read the scroll.

Revelation 5:4 "And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon."

John began to cry because it seemed that there was no one to open this book. In fact, these unworthy men were even kept from looking at the book.

Verses 5-7: Christ is presented both as a “Lion” (Ruler), from the “tribe of Judah” (compare Gen. 49:10), and as a “Lamb” (Redeemer; compare Isa. 53:7; John 1:29). The “Root of David” shows a messianic connection with the Davidic covenant (compare 2 Sam. 7:16; Isa. 11:1), and Christ’s right to the throne of Israel. The vision of Christ here brings together the twofold aspect of His first and second comings, His work as Savior and as Sovereign. Christ has the right to judge, possess, and rule the earth because of His submission to the death of the Cross (compare Phil. 2:8-11).

Revelation 5:5 "And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof."

Remember the twenty-four elders were representatives of the church. It really doesn't matter which one of the twenty-four this is.

"The Lion of the tribe of Judah". One of the earliest titles for the Messiah (see notes on Gen. 49:8-12). It speaks of His fierceness and strength, which although glimpsed in His first coming, do not appear in their fullness until the moment anticipated here.

The names of our Lord are never given by accident, but all convey a part of His nature. Since the lion is the king of beasts and since Judah is the ruling tribe of Israel, this indicates that Christ is to come as King to reign over human affairs.

The "Lion of the tribe of Judah", is Jesus of course. In Matthew, we are shown Jesus as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. It is interesting to note that even though Jesus is descended from David in the flesh, He is also David's God.

"The Root of David." Another clearly messianic title (see notes on Isa. 11:1-10), it anticipates His being a descendant of David, who with devastating force will compel the wicked of the earth to succumb to His authority. This, of course, refers to Jesus' incarnation on His birth with His roots in the family of David.

This "hath prevailed", just indicates that Jesus won the battle. He came against Satan and Jesus won. He won in a way that no one expected when He died on the cross. Jesus is the only one worthy to open the book. He was victorious over sin and Satan. He alone lived upon this earth free from sin. He is worthy.

Revelation 5:6 "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth."

This is John looking at the very same scene with more being revealed to him as he looks. It is almost as if he is astonished when he says "lo".

Here we see Him at the throne, and very near are the twenty-four representatives of all Christendom. This is an unusual thing here, for Jesus is the Right Hand of God. This book is actually held by Him, and yet, we see Him go to take the book and open it. As in dreams, many symbolisms are present here.

"Lamb": Hearing of a lion, John turns to see a lamb (literally, "a little, pet lamb"). God required the Jews to bring the Passover lamb into their houses for 4 days, essentially making it a pet, before it was to be violently slain (Exodus 12:3, 6). This is the true Passover Lamb, God's Son (compare Isa. 53:7; Jer. 11:19; John 1:29).

Where would the Lamb, Jesus, be but in the midst? We saw in a previous lesson how He was in the midst of the church. Here we see Him as the perfect Lamb sacrifice. Everything that He is surrounded by is significant to His church. Jesus is the central figure in all of this.

We know also that Jesus is definitely in the midst of the four gospels. He is the central theme of all four books.

Many times, thoughts come to us (as we are viewing something), that are not something we see with the eye. Here we see John realizing the death of the Lamb, as well as Him resurrected.

"A lamb, looking as if it had been slain." The scars from its slaughter are still clearly visible, but it is standing, it is alive.

When Christ completed the work of redemption, He earned the title deed to the earth. As by Adam came sin, so by Christ came redemption. It is a beautiful picture that we see here! Even though the angel refers to our Lord in His glory as a Lion, indicating His power and might, John sees Him as a sacrificial Lamb. For John sees Him through eyes of faith. Those who reject Christ will see Him as a Lion when He comes to judge and to reign over them. Those who believe in Him will see Him as their sacrificial Lamb.

The "seven horns" indicate that all power belongs to Him indicating that the Lamb is not weak. A horn, as Scripture indicates is power (see Zech. 1:18). When Christ came the first time, as a Lamb, though He displayed certain powers, He did not manifest all His power. When He comes the next time, as a Lion, at His Glorious Appearing, it will be in the manifestation of His omnipotence, His all consuming power.

We see this verified in Matthew:

Matthew 28:18 "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

This statement is printed in red which means Jesus Himself spoke these words. This was spoken after His resurrection.

The "seven eyes" just means that He possesses all wisdom and understanding. "Seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth." These eyes speak of the judgment of our Lord, including the seven characteristics of the Holy Spirit that rests on Him without measure (Isaiah 11:2; John 3:34).

When our Lord comes, He will know all that human beings have ever thought or done. Every deed will be brought into judgment. Note that seven is God's number of perfection. Therefore, when Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, comes to judge the world at the end of the Tribulation, it will be as the perfect judge. Who has all power and who knows all about humankind. It should also be borne in mind that He was the sacrificial Lamb, but people rejected him.

The Seven Spirits of God. The seven Spirits do not mean seven different Spirits, but the seven characteristics of the one Holy Spirit. It should be borne in mind, that these characteristics are not limited to His role in heaven, His role during the Tribulation, or His role during the Church Age, but are an eternal part of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, in addition to the fruit of the Spirit found (in Gal. 5:22), we should expect to manifest these characteristics:

1. The Spirit of the Lord;

2. The Spirit of wisdom;
3. The Spirit of understanding;
4. The Spirit of counsel;
5. The Spirit of power;
6. The Spirit of knowledge;
7. The Spirit of the fear of the Lord.

The "seven spirits of God", just means that all the Spirits of God dwell in Him. He has all the fullness of the Godhead dwelling in Him.

These seven Spirits of God sent forth into the earth are the spiritual gifts to help the Christians mentioned (in 1 Corinthians 12). It begins;

1 Cor. 12:1 "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant."

Then it goes on and lists the gifts that will be of help to us Christians.

1. Word of Wisdom;
2. Knowledge;
3. Faith;
4. Healing;
5. Miracles;
6. Prophecy;
7. Discernment;
8. Tongues;
9. Interpretations.

There are far more than seven. Seven is just a spiritual number meaning the completeness, or fullness of the Spirit. If you wanted to, you could name a hundred more, such as charity, patience, etc.

Verses 7-10: This is the focus and climax of the entire vision. When the Lamb (Jesus Christ), "took the book", the weeping ended and praise erupted in the form of a "new song", celebrating what He had done (providing redemption through His death), and what He was about to do (reclaim authority over all the earth).

Revelation 5:7 "And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne."

As I said before, this is Jesus, the Lamb, taking the book from His own self, because He is the Right Hand of God.

Verses 8-14: Three outbursts of praise and worship are directed toward Christ and the Father:

- (1) The “beasts” and the “elders” praise the “Lamb” for having “redeemed” them through His “blood” (verses 8-9), and for giving them authority (in the future), to “reign on the earth” (verse 10);
- (2) Myriads of “angels” also praise the Lamb for His glory and wisdom (verses 11-12); and
- (3) Every area of creation worships both the Father and the Lamb (verses 13-14).

The “prayers of saints (verse 8), may be prayers for the fulfillment of the messianic kingdom (compare 6:9-10; 8:3).

Revelation 5:8 "And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four [and] twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints."

“Harps”: These ancient stringed instruments not only accompanied the songs of God’s people (1 Chron. 25:6; Psalm 33:2), but also accompanied prophecy (compare 1 Sam. 10:5). The 24 elders, representative of the redeemed church, played their harps in praise and in a symbolic indication that all the prophets had said was about to be fulfilled.

“Vials full of odors”: These golden, wide-mouth saucers were common in the tabernacle and temple. Incense was a normal part of the Old Testament ritual. Priests stood twice daily before the inner veil of the temple and burned incense so that the smoke would carry into the Holy of Holies and be swept into the nostrils of God. That symbolized the people’s prayers rising to Him.

“Prayers of the saints”: Specifically, these prayers represent all that the redeemed have ever prayed concerning ultimate and final redemption.

All of Christendom will bow before the Lamb. We read that every knee will bow and every tongue confess to God (Romans 14:11).

It is a real comfort to know that every prayer that we ever prayed is stored in heaven.

Revelation 5:9 "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;"

“New song” (compare 15:3). The Old Testament is filled with references to a new song that flows from the heart that has experienced God’s redemption or deliverance (compare 14:3; Psalms 33; 144:9). This new song anticipates the final, glorious redemption that God is about to begin.

This beautiful new song, proclaiming how worthy Jesus is to receive our adoration, will be a magnificent sound. All voices will be in accord. This song praising Jesus for redeeming us from sin and death will be accompanied by the beautiful music of the harp in the verse before.

“Redeemed us to God by thy blood”: The sacrificial death of Christ on behalf of sinners made Him worthy to take the scroll (compare 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:3; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 2 Peter 2:1).

The shed blood of Jesus was and is, the redeeming factor. I love the fact that nationality, or color, or sex, or any other separation that man has will not be a factor here. Salvation is for everyone who will accept it. Jesus died for each one of us whether we are Americans, Indians, Africans, Chinese, Russian or otherwise. It is our choice whether to accept, or reject, the gift of salvation. No other barrier exists.

Revelation 5:10 "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

(In verse 10), speaking of "kings and priests", could be rendered kingdoms and priests in that kingdom. We will see later in Revelation, that Christians will reign with Jesus 1000 years on the earth as subordinates to Jesus. Just as there were priests with a high priest over them, our ruling will be under His rule (see note on 1:6).

We shall reign on the earth. A similar promise is given to that "multitude, which no man could number (Rev. 7:9), when resurrected after the Tribulation (Rev. 20:4). Together the Christians, who were saved before the Tribulation, along with the saints saved out of the Tribulation will "rule and reign" during Christ's one thousand-year kingdom.

Revelation 5:11 "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;"

“Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands”: The number is to express an amount beyond calculation. The Greek expression can also be translated “innumerable” or “many thousands” (Luke 12:1; Heb. 12:22).

This number is not a literal number and would not be to our advantage to figure out. It just means a number too large to count. This is a very large company of ministering spirits, angels. The voice had to be loud to be such a multitude.

Revelation 5:12 "Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

“Power ... blessing”: This doxology records 7 qualities intrinsic to God and to the Lamb that demand our praise.

The interesting thing here is that this huge gathering was all saying the same thing. It was total adoration and recognition of Jesus of who and what He was. Not that they could give Jesus anything, but they realized that it was correct for Him to possess all things.

Revelation 5:13 "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, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, [be] unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

Jesus created everything and everyone. This just means that trees, animals, fish, fowl, and all living beings, such as animals and people, all cried out blessings to God.

The "him that sitteth upon the throne" could be God the Father and God the Son. Probably the Elohim God, because of the separation of the blessing afterward unto the Lamb. This praise was not for a limited time, but was to reach into all of eternity. The word "sitteth" means continuous sitting.

Revelation 5:14 "And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four [and] twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever."

These representatives of the Christians are saying, so be it (amen). Our worship of Him will never cease. Even in heaven, we will be praising and worshipping Him.

In closing chapter 5 we saw three outbursts of praise and worship are directed toward Christ and the Father.

(1) The beasts and the elders praise the Lamb for having redeemed them through His blood (verses 8-9), and for giving them authority (in the future), to reign on the earth (verse 10);

(2) Myriads of angels also praise the Lamb for His glory and wisdom (verse 11-12); and

(3) Every area of creation worships both the Father and the Lamb (verses 13-14). The prayers of saints (verse 8), may be prayers for the fulfillment of the messianic kingdom (6:9-10; 8:3).

Revelation Chapter 5 Questions

1. What was in the hand of Him that sat on the throne?
2. How many seals were on it?
3. Who is the Right Hand?
4. What could be written on the "backside" of the book?
5. Who was proclaiming, "Who is worthy to open the book"?

6. "No man in _____ nor in _____ neither under the _____ was able to open the book"
7. Why did John weep?
8. In verse 5, what two names was Jesus called?
9. Who were the twenty-four?
10. Who is the Lion of the tribe of Judah?
11. What two was Jesus victorious over?
12. What animal was Jesus shown as?
13. What was this symbolic of?
14. What did the seven horns mean?
15. What did the seven eyes symbolize?
16. Which are the seven _____ of God?
17. Who is the central figure of the four Gospels?
18. In Matthew 28:18, what do we see?
19. What does the seven Spirits mean?
20. In 1 Cor. 12, what gifts of the Spirit are listed?
21. The four beasts and the twenty-four elders had two things in their hands, what were they?
22. What are the vials of odors?
23. In the new song, what did it say about Jesus?
24. Jesus redeemed whom by His blood?
25. He had made us what?
26. Who is salvation for?
27. How many is this "ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands"?
28. What was this great number saying?
29. Who and what in verse 13, were saying blessing and honor to Him that sat on the throne?
30. How long will we praise Him?

31. What has God called you to do in the body of Christ?