

Revelation Lesson 5

Revelation Chapter 5

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Introduction: We continue in our study of the book of the Revelation this week as we begin chapter 5 of Revelation. John sees the Throne of God and a book.

I. The Scroll and the Lamb

Rev 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.

As John witnessed the grand sights and sounds about the throne area of heaven, his attention was directed to Him who sat upon the throne (God the Father). In His right hand there was a book. The word “book” (biblion biblion) here has the sense of a written document in the form of a scroll. It was common practice during that time for documents to be written on papyri and then rolled into a scroll.

That which was written on the outside may have been the title of the document describing its contents. The document would then be sealed. The seal secured its confidentiality. More importantly, if the scroll was an official document, it likely would have the imprimatur (the official stamp) of the authority set in the wax before it hardened. In the Roman Empire, the seal of Rome carried the weight of the authority of Rome. An unauthorized breaking of the seal would bring the wrath of Rome upon who broke the seal. This scroll had seven seals upon its leading edge. Under Roman law, a will required seven witnesses with their seven seals.

There is no indication this was a will. However, as the account of this book continues to be described in the upcoming chapter, the will of God is certainly taking its course. As the text unfolds, that official deed and title to the earth is delivered to the Son of God.

Rev 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?

John saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “*Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?*” The word translated as strong (ischurov ischuros) has the sense of ‘mighty.’ At the least is the implication that angels are mighty.

There likely also is the implication that there are degrees of power within the angelic realm. Some have greater authority or might than others. Some have

suggested this mighty angel is one of the several archangels. Michael is involved in the direct context of Daniel 12 and the 'recording' of the deed of the earth and may very well be the same.

This powerful angel therefore proclaims, perhaps rhetorically, 'Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?' The angel knew the answer to that question. However, to emphasize the gravity of the matter, he asked who therefore had the legal authority to break the seals of the deed to the earth?

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

Upon hearing this proclaimed question by the angel, John recorded that no one in the creation was able to open the book. The word translated as no man (oudeiv oudeis) literally means 'no one.' No one, mortal or otherwise, in heaven, earth, or under the earth, that is, even in hell was able. No one in the entire universe had the authority to take this crucial legal document, the deed to the earth, break its seals and read it.

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

John understood the implication of what he witnessed. He evidently perceived the significance of the book. It was the deed to the earth. He wept because no one had the authority to take charge of the mess on the earth. John was aware of the sin and persecution occurring on the earth. He understood the devil is the god of this world. He knew Satan had the dominion of a prince on the earth. He was grieved that no one could claim the deed to the earth and purge out the wickedness therein.

To be found worthy to open this document and read therein assumed not only legal authority, but ownership as well. The obtaining of ownership therefore implied its purchase by great price. One momentarily would step forth who met those conditions.

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

One of the elders told John, "Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." He announced that Jesus Christ had prevailed to take the book, open it, and break its seals. The word translated as prevailed (nikaw nikao) is most commonly translated as 'overcame,' 'conquered,' or 'won the victory.'

In light of the repeated promises in the preceding chapters for overcoming, it is made clear that our Lord in fact overcame on our behalf. John therefore had no cause for sorrow. There was One indeed who had the authority and prerogative to take the deed to the earth and do as He saw fit. He is called “the Lion of the tribe of Juda” which hearkens back to Genesis 49:9-10. There, Jacob prophesied that the tribe whence the royal dynasty of Israel would rule as a lion would be Judah.

That Lion is the glorified Son of God, Jesus Christ. He, moreover, is called “the Root of David” which hearkens back to Isaiah 11: 1,10 where the prophet foretold how the Branch (the Messiah-King) would someday sprout forth from the root of Jesse (i.e., David).

(Isa 11:1) And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

It is He who conquered death, the world, sin, and the devil. It is He who, through His shed blood, purchased the redemption of the earth back unto Himself. He only had the legal power and authority to take the book and loose (i.e., break) its seven seals. He is about to take over this sin cursed earth which has long suffered in the domain of Satan.

The Tribulation is about to begin as will be noted in the following chapter. Then, Jesus Christ will make clear His authority. By His conquering death and resurrection, He has purchased the earth back to Himself. He will take the title thereto and assume control thereof.

Rev 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.

John suddenly beheld in the midst of the 24 elders the Lamb of God. Of the various New Testament writers, John (with a single exception of Peter) is the only one to emphasize that Jesus is the Lamb of God. See John 1:29

(Joh 1:29) The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

Moreover, John records the Lamb of God as having been slain. The word from which this phrase is translated (sfazwsphadzo) is conjugated as a perfect, passive, participle. John conveyed that he saw the Lamb of God ‘having been slain.’ His substitutionary death is apparent. Moreover, the fact He was alive and standing in heaven clearly bespeaks His resurrection and ascension. Lambs do

not typically have horns. However, throughout Scripture, horns are a symbol of authority and power.

The fact that John saw seven implies the great power and perfection of our resurrected Lord. His reference to “seven eyes” may be a representation pointing to His perfect knowledge and omniscience. In any event, these are equated with the “seven Spirits of God.” As noted in earlier comments (see notes on Revelation 1:4, 3:1, 4:5).

(Rev 4:5) And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

The seven Spirits of God likely are an allegoric reference to the perfection of the Holy Spirit and His perfect ministries to God’s people. (Recall the seven spirits before the throne of God).

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

The Lamb as it had been slain, came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. Our Lord will in that day claim all rights to the earth. The Tribulation will commence when He begins the process of assuming total control thereof.

Rev 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 odours, which are the prayers of saints.

Upon His receiving the deed to the earth, “the four beasts and four and twenty elders fall down before the Lamb.” The four angelic creatures before the throne of God, as well as the 24 elders of the church age, understood the significance of what had just taken place. They therefore fall down in worship before the Lamb. He is about to take the steps necessary to put the earth and its inhabitants under His authority.

Of interest is that these 24 elders each have a harp, implying use for the accompaniment of praise sung to God. There is not only vocal praise to God but accompaniment as well. There evidently will be profoundly beautiful music in heaven, directing praise to God and the Lamb. Moreover, these 24 elders also had in their possession “golden vials full of the odours, which are the prayers of saints.”

The word translated as vials (fialh phiale) has the idea of ‘shallow bowls’ or ‘deep saucers.’ They were full of odours. The word thus translated (yumiamia thumiamia) literally refers to incense. What may be referred to are golden

vessels for the burning of incense. However, the clear application is that these all are “the prayers of saints.” In Psalm 141:2, David wrote of his prayer being “set forth before thee as incense.” Clearly implied is the aromatic fragrance of the prayer of God’s people to Him. Further implied is that praise in prayer is stored up in heaven, as it were, in golden vials to be released at the appropriate time before God as fragrant incense. It behooves us to be all the more careful to utter praise to God. It is a fragrant aroma unto Him.

Rev 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;

In full view of the Lamb taking the deed of the earth and denoting Him about to take control thereof, the 24 elders (perhaps with the orchestral accompaniment of their harps) sung a new song of praise to Him. That song will be, 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. They praise our Lord Jesus Christ as being worthy or having the exclusive privilege and right to assume control of the deed to the earth and exercise His perfect will. Those details may be what is revealed in the succeeding chapters.

His right thereto, in part, was that He had been slain, thus redeeming mankind by shedding and offering up His own perfect sinless blood thus appeasing God the Father. Several crucial thoughts are in view. The required payment for our redemption (i.e., its ransom) is the shed blood of Jesus Christ. See also I Peter 1:18-21.

(1Pe 1:18) Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

(1Pe 1:19) But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

(1Pe 1:20) Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

(1Pe 1:21) Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

The identity of the 24 elders is made clear. They were representative of those redeemed by the blood of the Lamb out of every nation on earth.

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

These representatives of the church age, had been made to God “kings and priests.” Lest there be question as to what they refer, the elders are described in that they will “reign on the earth.” Several comments are due. The position of being kings and priests, again, refers to rank, authority, and privilege in the coming Kingdom of Christ throughout the Millennium. This, no doubt, also includes the eternal kingdom as noted in Revelation 22:5. See similar comments on Revelation 1:6.

(Rev 22:5) And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

In view are rewards for faithful service in the coming kingdom. It may be safely assumed that such privilege is not only for the elders in heaven, for they are merely representatives of the churches. The bible teaches in this regard that all who have faithfully served the King of kings in this life will receive such privilege then. The degree of reward will be predicated upon the degree of service and faithfulness now.

Apparently, there will be the privilege of not only ruling in His Kingdom at His pleasure, but also some will have some function as priests in that day. Implied here is more than the priesthood of the believer. There apparently will be some sort of priestly service awarded then for those who have faithfully served Him now. Though undefined, it quite apparently is of great reward.

Rev 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;

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

In addition to the praise John heard from the 24 elders before the throne, he also heard vast angelic choirs join in praising the Lamb. He described hearing “the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders.” What a heavenly choir that will be. For there were “ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.”

Two distinct groups are noted: (1) the angelic throng, including the angelic creatures (i.e., the beasts); (2) the elders, representative of the saved assembled in heaven.

The word translated as ten thousand (muriavmyrias) has the sense of 'a myriad' and is where that English word derives. The word translated as thousands (ciliav chilias) does literally mean 'thousands.' The phrase literally reads 'myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands.' The thought is of an innumerable company. In as much as there are two groups involved and two numeric descriptions thereof, implied is that there is a myriad of angels present as well as an innumerable number of the saints.

In as much as the Tribulation, from a heavenly perspective, begins in the following chapter and in as much as an innumerable number of the saints is present in heaven before the Tribulation thus indicates, once again a pre Tribulation Rapture is clearly implied. The combined heavenly choirs thus sing with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing."

Some have advanced the objection that no mention is herein made to singing. However, the reference to the harps in verse 8 as well as the song in verse 9 clearly implies music and thus singing. Even as there soon will be seven seals opened, and even as the Lamb is represented as having seven horns and seven eyes (the seven Spirits of God), the heavenly choirs proceed to sing a sevenfold hymn of praise. Because of His redemptive work at Calvary, He is worthy to receive power. The word translated (dunamiv dunamis) implies great power with which He herein is vested to seize control of the earth from Satan.

He is worthy to receive riches, that is all the wealth of His creation of which He is about to take control. He is worthy to receive the wisdom necessary to rule and reign in His coming kingdom. He also is worthy to receive the endowed strength necessary to overcome Satan at the battle of Armageddon.

He then is also worthy to receive the honor and glory He will receive as He sits King for ever and ever on His throne. Finally, He is worthy to receive blessing or praise for all He is, all He has done, and all He will do.

Rev 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 honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

In that day, "every creature" in God's universe will praise Him. Implied is not only the angelic realm and the church glorified, but also all others in His kingdom in that day. They will join in praising God the Father and the Lamb saying: "blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

Evident is a foreview of the universal praise to God and Jesus Christ in the coming millennial kingdom as well as the eternal kingdom thereafter. In that day, all will praise His glory and power.

Rev 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.

As John was afforded a glimpse of these momentous events in heaven, first the reception of the deed to the earth by the Lamb and then the praise which will thereafter come, the 24 elders “fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.” Meanwhile, the four angelic beasts (i.e., creatures) said, Amen! God through John has provided a glimpse of His glorious throne in the days just prior to the beginning of the Tribulation on the earth.

Jesus Christ is given the title deed to the earth. The assembled saints in heaven along with angelic choirs pour out their hearts in praise to God. They know what is about to happen as Jesus begins the process of seizing control of the earth. They also know when completed, the entire universe will praise God and the Lamb. It is a time of great rejoicing in heaven as Jesus begins to fulfill His will.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.