

Ministry of Grace

Revelation Chapter 5 The Scroll and the Lambkin

General

In the previous chapter of Revelation, we were introduced to the Throne Room of God. There we saw the Father in all His glory with the Holy Spirit before Him (represented by the 7 war torches). They were surrounded by the four living ones and the 24 elders (the church). In this chapter we will now see a scroll in the Father's hand that is written on the inside and the outside. The scroll is sealed with seven seals and a strong angel is making a proclamation seeking someone who is worthy to open the scroll.

To John's dismay, no one is found to be worthy to open the scroll and to read its contents. This so disturbs John that he breaks down crying. He is comforted by one of the elders who informs him that the Lion of the tribe of Judah has conquered and is able to break the seals and open the scroll. But – when John turns to see the lion, he sees a little lamb instead. The lamb appears as if it had been slain, but it is standing in the midst of the scene. This little lamb is none other than Jesus Christ, Himself, who conquered sin and death and now is about to judge the permanent earth dwellers. As soon as He takes the scroll from the Father, the 24 elders and a host of angels begin to sing the praises of the Lamb.

Revelation 5:1

¹Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

“scroll” – This the Greek word *biblios*. In John's time most writing was done on a paper-like material called papyrus. It was made from the long reed-type papyrus plant by stripping off the tough outer husk and cutting the inner “pith” into thin strips. These strips were then laid side-by-side, then overlaid with additional strips laid perpendicular to the first strips. This was then pressed or hammered together until the sticky pith formed an even, flat sheet which was then set out to dry in the sun. Long sections of this material were then joined together and rolled into a scroll. The scroll was referred to as a *biblios*.

“written within and on the back” – 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 was written on the inner pages, rolled-up and sealed. The contents were then 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.

“sealed” – Greek *katesphragidzō* consisting of *kata*, an intensifier and a form of *sphragidzo*, meaning “to seal.” Hence, it means to “completely seal” or to “greatly seal.” The most common form of document sealing was with a waxy substance that was imprinted with a “signet” identifying the one who authorized the document. This form of sealing is what we get our English word “signature” from. The more important a document was, the more seals that were applied. Title deeds and other documents of ownership were often sealed with seven seals. There is an example of a real estate transaction documented in this way in **Jeremiah 32:10-15**.

According to John Phillips, in his book, *Exploring Revelation*:

the scroll is most likely the title deed to the earth. Two considerations lead to this conclusion. In the first place, the call having gone forth for an applicant to come and take the scroll, John wept because no man was found worthy to do so. The sphere of man is evidently in view. Furthermore, when the seals on the scroll are eventually broken, disasters overtake the earth. The right to rule the earth is now to be decided at the throne of God, once and for all.” [John Phillips]

Revelation 5:2, 3

²And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" ³And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it,

“mighty” – Greek *ischuron* from *ischuo* meaning “strength, ability, and power, both physical and moral.”

“proclaiming” – Not just saying but proclaiming like one making an announcement to all those present.

“worthy” – Greek *axios*, which means one who has the ability both physically and morally to do something.

“no one” – Greek *oudeis*, which literally means “not even one.”

“to look into it” – Greek *blepō*, which refers to the physical act of seeing, but it also means “to perceive with the eyes and discern, or understand.”

Revelation 5:4, 5

⁴and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.

⁵And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

“weep” – Greek *klaio* meaning “to weep, wail, or lament, implying not only the shedding of tears, but also every external expression of grief.” It appears that John was actually sobbing or wailing, he was so distraught.

“Lion of the tribe of Judah” is a reference to Jacob’s blessing of Judah when he blessed all his children just before his death.

Judah, may your brothers praise you. May your hand be in the neck of your enemies. May your father's sons bow before you. Judah is a lion's whelp. My son, you have gone up from the prey. He stooped, he crouched like a lion; and like a lioness, who shall rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a Lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come. And the obedience of the peoples to him. (*Genesis 49:8-10*) [MKJV]

“the Root of David” – Jesus is not only the offspring of David, he is also the source from which David (and all of mankind) came. “Root” is the Greek word *rhidza* (from which we get the term rhizome, a type of root) meaning “the root of a plant.” Christ, Himself, claimed to be both the root and the descendant of David:

I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star. (*Revelation 22:16*)

“has conquered” – This is the same Greek verb, *nikaō*, used to describe the “conquerors” or “overcomers” in the letters to the seven churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. The tense of the verb

in the current verse is aorist, active, indicative, indicating past action completed at a single point of time. This is most likely a reference to the death and resurrection, when Christ offered himself as the Lamb of God as a payment for sins and then overcame death proving himself as the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God! Because of this He is worthy (able physically and morally) “so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals”

Revelation 5:6, 7

⁶And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.

“Lamb” – There are several words that we want to look at.

- *probaton* = a sheep
- *amnos* = a sacrificial lamb
- *aren* = a lamb or a young sheep
- *arnion* = the diminutive of *aren*, meaning a small lamb or a little lambkin.

The word translated “Lamb” in the current verse is *arnion*, hence it is “a little lambkin.” John looked up expecting to see a powerful, ferocious lion and, instead, saw a little lambkin, one that appears to have been slaughtered or slain, standing (which a dead animal cannot do.)

Revelation is the book of “the Little Lambkin.” The word “Lamb” only occurs twice in the Old Testament in reference to the Messiah (**Isaiah 53:7** and **Jeremiah 11:19**). It appears four times in the New Testament outside the book of Revelation, as a form of *amnos* – a sacrificial lamb (**John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32; I Peter 1:19**), and twice in the plural, as a form of *arnion*, (**Luke 10:3 & John 21:15**). However, it appears 28 times in Revelation, all of which are a translation of the Greek word *arnion*, “a little lambkin.”

Against Satan, the great dragon (**Revelation 12:9**) and the powerful, world ruling beast (**Revelation 13:1-3**), God will use the “little Lambkin” to conquer all.

Finally, as we study the book of Revelation, notice how many times Satan and the beast are depicted as large, menacing, and ferocious. Yet, they are conquered by “a little lambkin.” This may give us all a new understanding of the verses,

But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. (**1 Corinthians 1:27-29**)

“seven horns” – The horn is a symbol of an animal’s power and seven is the number of completeness or perfection. Therefore, the seven horns are seen as a reference to His omnipotence (total power).

“seven eyes” – This is a reference to the total vision (knowledge) of the Lamb and revealed in this verse to represent the “seven Spirits of God” or the “seven-fold Spirit of God” (see notes on **Revelation 3:1**). Therefore, it is a reference to God’s omniscience (total knowledge).

Daniel had a similar vision of this event where all dominion is given to the Messiah

I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion

and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13, 14)

Revelation 5:8

⁸And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

“harp, and golden bowls” – The grammatical structure of the Greek text seems to indicate that it was only the elders, not the living creatures, who held these two items.

“golden bowls full of incense” – These bowls were associated with the tabernacle and the temple where they were connected with the altar. They symbolize the intercessory work of the priests for the people. The burning of incense is associated with the prayers of the saints throughout the Bible (Psalms 141:2; Luke 1:9,10; Revelation 8:3,4)

Revelation 5:9,10

⁹And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

The reaction (of the living ones and the 24 elders) to the Lamb having taken the scroll is to bow down in worship proclaiming that He is worthy (remember in verse 2, “who is worthy?”)

“they sang” – Throughout the Bible, with the possible exception of Job 38:7, it is nowhere recorded that the angels sing. Every place in the New Testament where the action of angels is recorded as singing (such as Luke 2:13), it is translated from the Greek verb *legō*, meaning “to say or to speak.”

Revelation 5:11, 12

¹¹Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹²saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

“around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders” – The word “around” is again from the word *kuklos*, meaning “to encircle.” Therefore, in this scene we have the Trinity in the middle, the four living ones encircling the throne, the twenty-four elders encircling them, and the angels encircling them.

“the living creatures” – These are the “living ones” that we saw in the previous chapter. According to the Jews, these four are Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael.

“myriads of myriads” -- The Greek word *muriades* (the plural form of *urias*), transliterated “myriads” is the largest number in the Greek language, representing 10,000. Literally translated, therefore, this number is 10,000s of 10,000s. If the number was to have been 100,000,000 (ten thousand times ten thousand) the word *muriades* would have been written in the singular (a myriad-myriad), but here *muriades* is written in the plural each time, which is the Greek way of indicating a very large number which cannot be counted.

“saying with a loud voice” – Notice that they are not “singing” but “saying” and it was with a loud voice. Literally, this is “with a great sound.”

“power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing” – The seven attributes denoting the worthiness of God to receive all praise.

Revelation 5:13, 14

13 And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" **14** And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

“Might” – This is the word *kratos* (active power) instead of *ischus* (reserve of strength) as used in the previous verse.

“Amen!” – As a finale to the universal celebration of praise to God, the four living ones proclaim Amen! (It is truth.)

“the elders fell down and worshiped” – In response to the singing of praise and worship by all of creation, those redeemed by the Lamb fall down in worship.

So What?

Wow! What a sight and what amazing sounds! And - we will be there to see and hear it! Let’s pause and imagine it, just for a few seconds.

In the last lesson we talked about the majesty of our God and the privilege we Christians will have of being in the Throne Room of God during the Tribulation. In this lesson we see ourselves in the presence of Almighty God, but also witnessing the Lamb of God, the Little Lambkin, taking the title deed to the earth from the hand of the Father. This is the last peaceful scene we will encounter until we get to chapters 21 and 22, where we will see the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.

What follows, beginning in chapter six, is a depiction of God’s wrath being poured out on the permanent earth dwellers. This is yet another example of a situation where we should be on our knees before God expressing humble thanksgiving for all that He has done for us and for His promise to keep us out of the time of the Tribulation. Once the church is out of the way, Satan will have no more resistance from God and will work his evil schemes without opposition.

What do I mean, “Satan will have no more resistance from God?” In Paul’s second letter to the church in Thessalonica, he described the removal of the one who is restraining Satan’s evil plan. At that time the one we know as the anti-christ will be revealed (here referred to as the “lawless one”). These verses describe the time known as “The Day of The Lord,” which begins with Daniel’s 70th week.

One other thing to note is that the word translated “rebellion” is *apostasia*, a form of *aphistēmi*, meaning “a departure.” Is the departure a description of the rapture? I think it is!

Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are

perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-12)

Let me ask you, “Who on earth is able to resist Satan?” The answer is “No one!” This is why even the archangel, Michael, would not presume to rebuke Satan:

But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.” (Jude 1:9)

In the passage above from 2 Thessalonians, Paul tells us that there is someone restraining the activity of Satan. That person can only be God, Himself, in the form of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is now restraining evil through His indwelt believers. But, when the Rapture comes (the departure), He will be removed with us and the lawless one, the anti-christ, the Beast out of the Sea, will be able to control the hearts and minds of the permanent earth dwellers. At that time, God will send a strong delusion so that they will believe the lies of the Beast and they will obediently follow him all the way to the Lake of Fire.

We may think that today’s politicians and bureaucrats are abusing their power with all the ridiculous edicts about masks and vaccinations. But this is nothing compared to what will happen when the Beast takes power. And – we see so many people today deceived into thinking that the politicians and bureaucrats are doing all this for the good of the people. Once the Beast takes over, all of the permanent earth dwellers will believe his lies and give him complete power and control over their lives.

Now What?

So, my friends, put on your seat belts, and prepare yourselves for some intense warfare that will pit a couple of beasts and a dragon against a Little Lambkin. While we sit on the sidelines and watch this drama unfold, let us once again give thanks to our Redeemer. We have been purchased with the blood of the Little Lambkin, we are adopted as God’s sons, making us His heirs, and we have been promised that He will keep us out of this time of trouble. We will have eternity to thank him! But, let’s start now!

Let’s pray.

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