

Revelation - Chapter Five

Chapter summary - *The events of chapter 5 occur right after those of chapter 4. The scene, as in chapter 4, is the throne of God in heaven. Present are the cherubim, the twenty-four elders (representing the raptured, glorified church), and the Holy Spirit in His sevenfold glory (4:5). The events described in these two chapters anticipate the holocaust of divine judgment about to be poured out on the sinful, rebellions, cursed earth (chaps. 6-19). Awestruck by the indescribable majesty of God's throne, and the flashes of lightning and peals of thunder that proceed from it, the cherubim and elders begin a series of hymns of praise to God. Those hymns celebrate God as creator and redeemer, and rejoice that He is about to take back what is rightfully His. This is the moment that all Christians (Eph. 1:14) and the entire creation (Rom. 8:19-22) long for.*¹

*John sees an angel, holding a scroll representing judgment, sealed with seven seals, calling for someone worthy to break the seals and open the book (5:1-2). When no one is found, one of the elders consoles John: the Lion of the tribe of Judah will open the seals—and when John looks, he sees a bloody Lamb (vv. 3-7). When Christ as the Lamb takes the scroll, the whole company falls down in worship, affirming His worthiness “because . . . with Your blood You purchased men for God” (vv. 8-10). Unnumbered thousands of angels take up the chorus, praising the Lord as the universe joins in ascribing “praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever” (vv. 11-14).*²

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III. the vision of the Heavenly Host, (Chs. 4, 5)

B. THE VISION CONCERNING THE SCROLL CONTAINING 7 SEALS - (5:1-14)-- "WHO HAS THE TITLE DEED TO THE EARTH?"

1. The remorse over the lack of One to open the scroll, (1-4)

INTERPRETATION:

The Writing In the Scroll Which Guarantees the Tribulation Judgments (1)

¹ **And I saw in the right hand of Him** (God the Father), **who sat on the throne** (of the universe), **a scroll written inside and on the back**, (a scroll written on both sides and),³ **sealed with seven** (individual), **seals**.

NOTES:

COMMENTARY:

¹ MacArthur, *Revelation 1-11*, pp. 162, 163

² Richards, Lawrence O., *The Bible Reader's Companion*, (Logos)

³ John could see writing on both sides of the scroll, which meant that nothing more could be added. What was written was completed and final. Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Logos)

Who Introduces the Tribulation Judgments (2-12)

² **Then I saw a strong** (a mighty), **angel** (that stood out from the rest), **proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy** (i.e., who has the rank, who has the integrity, who has the ability or authority), **to open the scroll and to loose** (or break each of), **its** (seven), **seals?”**⁴

³ **And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth** (no one, no not one, in all of the universe), **was able** (was found worthy), **to open the scroll** (and carry out God's plan for His creation), **or to** (even), **look at it** (examine the contents of His plan).

⁴ **So, I** (John), **wept** ⁵**much** (wept bitterly), **because no one was found worthy** (i.e., possesses the credentials), **to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.**

F APPLICATION:

What's so significant about the scroll?

The scroll represents Christ's "title deed" to all that the Father promised Him because of His sacrifice on the cross. "Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen [nations] for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Ps. 2:8 [Da. 7:13, 14; Eph. 1:20, 21; Ac. 2:35, 36 -- Matt. 4:8, 9]). Jesus Christ is the "Heir of all things" (Heb. 1:2).⁶

Why does the Apostle John cry so when there is no one to open the scroll?

[W]ho has the power to defeat Satan and his demon hosts, to wipe out sin and its effects, and to reverse the curse on all of creation?⁷

When the scroll is opened and the seals are broken, then the universe is governed in the interest of the Church. Then, God's glorious, redemptive purpose is being realized; His plan is being carried out and the contents of the scroll come to pass in the history of the universe. But if the scroll is not opened it means that there will be no protection for God's children in the hours of bitter trial; no judgments upon a persecuting world; no ultimate triumph for believers; no heaven and earth; no future inheritance.⁸ (Rom. 8:18-24)

John wept, for he realized that God's glorious redemption plan for mankind could never be completed until the scroll was opened. The redeemer had to be near of kin, willing to redeem, and able to redeem. Jesus Christ meets all of the qualifications.⁹

Adam surrendered the scepter of dominion over the earth to Satan (Gen. 3:6), and Christ is the one who will gain it back, (Gen. 49:10).

NOTES:

⁴ This is the first of 20 times "loud voice" occurs in Revelation. The last is in 21:3. Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Logos)

⁵ Same word used of Jesus when He wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41), and Peter when he wept after denying Jesus, (Luke 22:62)

⁶ Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Logos).

⁷ MacArthur, *Revelation 1-11*, p. 163

⁸ Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors*, p 89.

⁹ Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Logos).

Does the scroll have anything to say to us today?

We will see in chapter six that Jesus begins to take control of the earth having established who is worthy, or has the authority to do so. Thus, Jesus also establishes the fact of who has the deed to your soul, body and spirit; He does! And He can do with it what He wants!

2. The proclamation concerning the One to open the scroll, (5-10)

INTERPRETATION:

⁵ **But** (as I John wept), **one of the** (24), **elders said to me, “Do not weep,** (stop your crying). **Behold** (look John!), **the Lion** (the King), **of the tribe of Judah** (Isa. 49:9-10), **the Root** (the Messianic descendant), **of David** (Jesus Christ [Isa. 11:1, 10; Rev. 22:16]), **has prevailed** (conquered, achieved the victory over sin, death and hell's forces; Jesus Christ is worthy), **to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals,”** (in order to carry out God the Father's plans [*in this case, execute the upcoming judgments and take back the scepter of dominion over the earth and its inhabitants*])

⁶ **And** (being stirred by the elder), **I looked, and behold** (sure enough), **in the midst of** (the company surrounding), **the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb** (a small, young lamb, but it was not ordinary lamb--it looked), **as though it had been slain** (it had the marks of being sacrificed), **having seven horns** (signifying its having perfect power and authority), **and seven eyes** (signifying its having perfect knowledge, understanding and wisdom, surveillance), **which are** (also represented by), **the seven Spirits of God** (i.e., the Holy Spirit, which was), **sent out into all the earth,** (exercising these qualities to carry out the will of God concerning His creatures).¹⁰

⁷ **Then He** (the Lion, the Root of Jesse, the slain Lamb, the worthy one, Jesus Christ), **came** (moved forward), **and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him** (God the Father), **who sat on the throne.**

F APPLICATION:

The Lamb being slain is a perfect example of "One who was so devoted to the will of God as to die in obedience to it,--so committed to holiness and righteousness as to be *slain* rather than submit to sin."¹¹

¹⁰ Jesus Christ is called “the Lamb” at least twenty-eight times in the Book of Revelation (the Greek word used means “a little pet lamb”) and the emphasis is not hard to miss. God’s wrath is “the wrath of the Lamb” (Rev. 6:16). Cleansing is by “the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:14). The church is “the bride of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:7; 21:9). Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. 1997, [Online] Available: Logos Library System. This thought of the *wounds* of Christ, blessed *comfort* to His own, (John 20:20) will strike stark *terror* to His enemies! [Acts 2:36-37] For the *slain* Lamb *cannot* compromise with the iniquity they love! Newell, *The Book of the Revelation*, p. 97.

¹¹ Newell, *The Book of the Revelation*, p. 97.

What kind of an example does our life portray? How devoted are we to the will of God. Are we willing to die for it? Are we so committed to holiness and righteousness that we would rather die than submit to sin? Or, is our life marked by compromise, by inconsistencies, and even betrayal. Are we more smorgasbord Christians than "*for me to live is Christ and to die is gain*" Christians? How committed are we to the will and commands of God? How well and consistently do we put God, His character and His Word on display in our lives.

Yes, Christ is a perfect example and we'll never have a tract record like His, but we can be and are to be an habitual, consistent example!

⁸ **Now when He** (the one found to be worthy), **had taken the scroll**, (the weeping had ended and the praising began as), **the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb** (in worship), **each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are** (or represent), **the prayers of the saints**, (which are music to the Father's ears and a precious aroma to His nose).

⁹ **And** (as something new was taking place), **they** (the elders), **sang a new song**,¹² (of worship), **saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals;** (exact the judgments the scroll contains), **for You** (alone), **were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe** (of every common ancestor), **and tongue** (of every common language), **and people** (of every common race), **and nation** (of every common kingdom),

¹⁰ **And have** (not only redeemed us, but), **made us** (purchased us with the intent that we be), **kings and priests to** (serve and have unlimited access to), **our God; and we shall reign on the earth.**" (with Christ [20:6; 2 Tim. 2:12]).

¹² What kind of song did they sing? To begin with, it was a *worship hymn*, for they said, "Thou art worthy!" To *worship* means "to ascribe worth," and Jesus alone is worthy. [Warren Wiersbe states] When I was in the pastorate, I tried to open each morning worship service with a hymn that lifted the congregation's minds and hearts upward to the Lord Jesus Christ. Too many contemporary songs are "I" centered rather than "Christ" centered. They so emphasize the believer's experience that they almost ignore the Lord's glory. Certainly there is a place for that kind of song, but nothing can compare with adoring Christ in spiritual worship.

But this song was also a *Gospel song!* "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us [some texts read *them*] by Thy blood." The word translated *slain* means "violently slain" (Rev. 5:6). Heaven sings about the Cross and the blood!

This heavenly hymn was also a *devotional hymn*, for it announced our unique position in Christ as "a kingdom of priests."

Finally, this song was a *prophetic hymn*: "We shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:10). When Jesus Christ returns to earth, He will establish His righteous kingdom for 1,000 years; and we shall reign with Him (Rev. 20:1-6). The prayers of the saints, "Thy kingdom come!" will then be fulfilled. Creation shall then be set free from bondage to sin (Isa. 11:1-10; Rom. 8:17-23), and Christ shall reign in justice and power. Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. 1997, [Online] Available: Logos Library System.

¹¹ **Then I looked** (around), **and I heard the voice of many angels around** (surrounding), **the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand** (myriads and myriads of them), **and thousands of thousands** (they were uncountable),
¹² (all), **saying with a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb** (of God, Jesus Christ), **who was slain** (on the cross -- to not only receive the scroll, but), **to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!”** (Christ is worthy to be ascribed all these things and more in our praise to Him and worship of Him.)

**The Worship of God for
Dispensing the Tribulation Judgments (13, 14)**

¹³ **And every creature** (without exception), **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** (the entire universe in all its parts and with all its creatures joins the chorus of praise¹³), **I heard** (them), **saying: “Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!”** (Endless blessing, endless honor, endless praise, endless glory, and endless worship belong to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The creation is unable to contain its joy over its imminent redemption [cf. Rom. 8:19-22].¹⁴)
¹⁴ **Then** (as a result of all of this proclamation, praise, and worship), **the four living creatures said, “Amen!”** (so be it), **And** (following that), **the twenty-four elders fell down** (again), **and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.**

F APPLICATION:

Each seal as it is broken by the Lamb will have a revelation from God therein; a revelation of His divine purpose toward Christ and through Christ. It certainly will be a blessed day when one after another we see Him break the seals of the written book and bring to pass what is written under each seal.¹⁵

The theme of ...[the] hymn [in Revelation four] is *God the Creator*, while in Revelation 5 the elders praise *God the Redeemer*. The praise in Revelation 4 is given to the Father on the throne, while in Revelation 5 it is directed to the Son (the Lamb) before the throne. The closing hymn (Rev. 5:13) is expressed to both, another proof of the deity of Jesus Christ.¹⁶

¹³ Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors*, p. 92

¹⁴ MacArthur, *Revelation 1-11*, p. 173

¹⁵ Newell, *The Book of The Revelation*, p. 101

¹⁶ Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Logos)

THE JUDGMENTS WHICH INTRODUCE THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

1. These judgments are written and sealed, (decreed and certain, although delayed --5:1)..
2. These judgments require a worthy person to unleash them, and no ordinary person qualifies, (5:2, 3).
3. Only the Lamb (Christ), holds the credentials to initiate these divine judgements.
 - 1) His decent gives Him the right, (5:5) --*the tribe of Judah and the family of David.*
 - 2) His death gives Him the right, (5:6) --*the Lamb still bears the scars.*
 - 3) His dominion gives Him the right, (5:5) --*He prevailed*
 - (1) Prevailed over sin
 - (2) Prevailed over the devil
 - (3) Prevailed over death
 - 4) His deity gives Him the right, (5:6).
 - (1) He is an omnipotent person --*seven horns*
 - (2) He is an omniscient person --*seven eyes*
 - [(3)He is an omnipresent person --*seven eyes*]
4. The coming of these judgments is an answer to the prayers of the saints, (5:8).
5. The fulfillment of these judgments inspires the saints and angels to worship the Father and the Lamb, (5:9-14).
6. These judgments are indispensable to the setting up of the kingdom on earth, over which the glorified saints will reign, (5:10).
7. The prophetic earth is the scene of these judgments, (5:6)
---*John L. Benson*

THE DOCTRINE OF ANGELS IN REVELATION FOUR AND FIVE

1. Angelic beings belong to different classifications, (4:7-9; 5:1, 11). They are not all the same in form or function.
2. Angels make haste to serve God, (4:8). --*wings*
3. Angels are super intelligent, (4:8). --*eyes all around*
4. Angels constantly acknowledge God's holiness, authority, power, and immutability, (4:9).
5. Angels hold harps, but saints offer prayers, (5:8).
6. Angels are proximate to the throne of the universe, (5:11).
7. At least 100 million angels exist, (5:11).
8. Angels participate in the worship of the Father and the Lamb, (5:12-14) ---*John L. Benson*

F APPLICATION:

 INTERPRETATION:

 COMMENTARY: