

## REVELATION STUDY 11

### Chapter 5

And I saw in the right *hand* of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. <sup>2</sup> Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" <sup>3</sup> And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. <sup>4</sup> So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. <sup>5</sup> But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." <sup>6</sup> And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. <sup>7</sup> Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. <sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying:

"You are worthy to take the scroll,  
And to open its seals;  
For You were slain,  
and have redeemed us to God by Your blood  
Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,  
<sup>10</sup> And have made us kings and priests to our God;  
And we shall reign on the earth."

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, <sup>12</sup> saying with a loud voice:

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain  
To receive power and riches and wisdom,  
And strength and honour and glory and blessing!

<sup>13</sup> 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, I heard saying:

"Blessing and honour and glory and power  
Be to Him who sits on the throne,  
And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"

**14 Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.**

The focus of chapter 4 was the throne but now John shifts the focus on the scroll held by the enthroned Lord. This scroll was rather unusual in that it had writing on both sides. This was not common practice and evidently there was a lot of content which needed lots of room for writing. The rolls of the scroll were on the left and the right and the writing lay in narrow columns about three inches wide. The scroll was held in the left hand and unrolled with the right and as the reading went on the previously read portion would be re-rolled.

When a roll was finished, it was fastened with strings and the strings were sealed with wax at the knots. The scroll was sealed with seven seals so there would be seven strings around the scroll each string sealed with wax. All the seals had to be opened before the scroll could be read. The scroll would probably have looked like this



Now what does this scroll mean, and here we could look at different ideas suggested by commentators over centuries. The one I personally favour is that the scroll was akin to the title deed to planet earth. The best connection to this suggestion is with Jeremiah 32:6-15 which describes Jewish title deeds as being sealed. A last will and

testament seems to fit the description of the scroll which would be sealed by the testator (the one who makes the will) and verified by witnesses. Only after the death of the testator would the seals be broken and the scroll unrolled. Now we know Jesus died but He came back to life and now bequeaths His vast estate to those who believe in Him. They become Joint heirs (Romans 8:17; and 1 Corinthians 3:22-23). It seems that the scroll is a little more than a will since we discover, as it is opened, that it includes divine judgments poured out on unbelievers.

God is not sitting on His throne wondering what is going to happen, rather He is calmly surveying an unfolding story whose every twist and turn is within His control and knowledge. This would serve to remind those first century Christians that God is in complete control of everything that happens.

A crisis occurs in John's vision. An angel issues a challenge **who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?** To John's dismay and grief no one steps forward. John weeps and sobs openly. The scroll must be opened if its contents are to become real. This is the book of destiny containing the course of redemptive history and its completion. If no one opens it the kingdom of God won't come in all its fullness. There was no answer to the angels challenge because creation is incapable of deciding or effecting its own destiny. Someone above the order of created beings must determine the course of history, only God can unfold this plan.

One of the elders rescued John from his grief and said **Do not weep behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals** This one "the lion" was the great figure of Old Testament prophecy, the Messiah. Here are some references

1. Genesis 49:9-10 **Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him?<sup>10</sup> The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people**

2. Isaiah 31:4 **For thus the LORD has spoken to me: “As a lion roars, And a young lion over his prey (When a multitude of shepherds is summoned against him, He will not be afraid of their voice Nor be disturbed by their noise), So the LORD of hosts will come down To fight for Mount Zion and for its hill.**

3. Hosea 11:10 **They shall walk after the LORD. He will roar like a lion. When He roars, Then His sons shall come trembling from the west;**

Because of the elders announcement John expected to see a lion but instead he saw “**a lamb**” John even uses the specific word for a little lamb, he signifies “a little or delicate lamb”. When men want symbols of power they conjure up powerful beasts but the representative of the kingdom is a lamb representing humility, gentleness and sacrificial love. The lamb looks as though it had been slain, evidently it had marks of sacrifice on it. The judgments to come is dictated and administered by the lamb who has already offered a way of escape by taking the judgment upon Himself. Judgment will come upon a world who hates the lamb and rejects Him and His offer of escape.

John saw the lamb **as though it had been slain** Perhaps the idea here is that the sacrifice of Jesus is a fresh today and current before God the Father as it ever was when Jesus died on the cross.

The lamb is not presented as an object of pity. He is depicted as **having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth** He is God Himself omnipotent (seven horns) and omniscience (seven eyes). In the Bible horns suggest power and eyes knowledge and wisdom which Jesus has in perfection thus again the number seven. The Holy Spirit is not only the Spirit of the Father but also the Spirit of Christ. (Acts 16:7 and Romans 8:9). Jesus takes the scroll as the lamb who is worthy and he alone can dictate the destiny of creation.

This is followed by praise to Him who is worthy. The song of the elders and the cherubim (vs 8-10). High ranking angels (the four living creatures) and redeemed men (24 elders) join in corporate worship. Each one had a harp (there is music in heaven) this is the passage that started the idea that people in heaven will have harps. They also had **golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints** they symbolically presented the prayers of the saints. They were not mediators on behalf of the saints, there is only one mediator between God and man and that is Christ Himself. How amazing that God considers the prayers of His people so precious and they rise to Him as a sweet aroma.

They sang **a new song You are worthy**. In those days Roman Emperors were celebrated upon arrival with the Latin expression “vere dignus” translated “you are worthy”. But now the true ruler of the world is honoured. In chapter four the song of praise is regarding Gods work in creation but here the emphasis is on His work of redemption and recreation. **You were slain, have redeemed us to God, by Your blood, every tribe tongue and people and nation, made us kings and priests for our God and we shall reign on the earth**. We are kings because of our royal birth and destiny to reign with Christ and priests because we need no mediator other than Christ

Now countless angels join in declaring the worthiness of the lamb and what He has accomplished. **Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever** The living God reigns forever. The Caesars come and go and others who persecute the people of God, but the Lord is eternal and worthy of our praise