

Revelation Chapter 5

The Scroll and the Lamb

¹ Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" ³ But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. ⁴ I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. ⁵ Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

⁶ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. ⁸ And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sang a new song:

"You are worthy to take the scroll
and to open its seals,

because you were slain,
and with your blood you purchased men for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation.

¹⁰ You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,
and they will reign on the earth."

¹¹ Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. ¹² In a loud voice they sang:

"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!"

¹³ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing:

"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power,
for ever and ever!"

¹⁴ The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Rev 5:1-14 (NIV)

5:1 The Roll In The Hand Of God

¹ Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals.

Barclay – believes that this was taken from Ezekiel 2: 9-10

⁹ Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll, ¹⁰ which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe.

Ezek 2:9-10 (NIV)

Note: it was a roll and not a book. (Revelation would need a roll 15 feet long to contain the writings)

1. Written on front and back – because of the expense of papyrus, it was usually written on both front and back.
2. sealed with 7 seals.
 - a. 7 seals = a will
 - b. stands for profound secrecy. (the Gospel of Peter was sealed with 7 seals to make sure that no unauthorized person could possibly open it.

Lenski – the Vision of the Lamb (chapter 4 = Vision of the Throne)

And I saw --- marks an advance from chapter 4 to chapter 5, and new subject and new significance... the Lamb.

Book verse Roll... much debate about whether it was an actual book or roll because of the 7 seals... Lenski does not argue one point or the other, just gives some reasons why there are two sides.

This difficulty is removed when we note that the book is not read, that only its seals are opened, and that upon the opening of each seal John sees a vision just as he reports.

This book is a symbol. Written on inside and outside (perfect participle) no space on either side & completely sealed with 7 seals = "the things that must occur after these things.

What has been written and thus forms a permanent record... for this reason there are seven seals the number of God (3) acting on the world (4). See the seven trumpets and seven bowls, here is the full,

complete record without a blank or a gap. Not even one line could be added.

When each seal is loosed or opened it releases the revealing symbolism of what the book contains. Nothing is read, so all that "must occur," remains known to God alone. The seals disclose the rest of the chapters in Revelation (6-22).

Palmer – It was first century to validate and secure books and scrolls with clay or wax seal imprinted with the special mark of the sender. The seal was considered the personal property of the sender.

Inside and on the back = symbolic expression of the whole sweeping history of the creation.

5:2-4 God's Book Of Destiny

And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?"³ But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it.⁴ I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside.

Barclay – The strong (mighty) angel appears in 10:1 and 18:21. the reason for a strong or mighty angel is that his voice might reach throughout the universe.

This is the record of that which is to happen in the last times. In Jewish tradition it was thought that there was a book as is this one.

This does not mean that everything is settled long ago and that we are in the grip of an inescapable fate. What it does mean is that God has a plan for the universe; and that the purpose of God will be in the end worked out.

John's tears two reasons

1. the promise of showing what must take place would not now be happening.

2. There was no one in the entire universe whom god could reveal his mysteries.

God cannot deliver a message to men unless there be a man fit to receive it.

Lenski – no one other than Christ can take the book from the right hand of God.

Strong Angel – great voice = the announcement is to reach every being everywhere. Notice that the angel does not attempt to open the book. No one in heaven or on earth could open the book.

Why John did not cry

Not littleness of faith, not disappointment because he was after all not to be shown the things that must occur. Not because of his preliminary knowledge of dreaded things to come, not grief that all were so unworthy, himself included.

Why did he? Because no one was found and the seals would not be opened.

Opening the book is not merely for the purpose of seeing what it contains and telling John; opening it means to execute what is written in the book --- to make them come true.

That thought could occur only to a human being; hence it is John alone who is upset and sobs.

Palmer – John weeps because he senses the profound significance of the scroll and the great question- what is the meaning of life? Why do I want to live? Where am I going?

When the book with all these answers cannot be opened, John weeps.

5:5 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

Barclay – We are now approaching one of the most dramatic moments in the Revelation, the emergence of the Lamb in the center of the scene.

Lenski – fittingly it is one of the elders – agent of the Word, and not an angel who dries John's tears by pointing him to Christ.

This is a great announcement!

"Weep Not" was spoken by Jesus while he was here with us. Luke 7:13 (widow of Nain who lost her son) and Luke 8:52 (Jairus and family for their little girl).

Human grief often springs from insufficient knowledge! Many times when we have the patience to wait and trust, we would see that God has his own solutions for the situations which bring us tears.

Lenski –Christ is the great conqueror. His tremendous victory is that won on the cross. The right to open the book!

Lion of Judah

Palmer – the lion is the most often named animal in the Bible, yet only in this place in the OT and NT is the lion given unmistakable messianic meaning

– back to Jacob’s final blessing of his sons before his death. (Gen 49:9 - ⁹ You are a lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness--who dares to rouse him?) **The strength of the lion and his undoubted place as king of beasts make him a fitting emblem of the all-powerful Messiah whom the Jews awaited.**

Lenski – the Lion is a symbol of the Victor

Root of David This title goes back to Isaiah’s prophecy that there will come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse and a root of Jesse who shall be an ensign to the people.

(Isaiah 11: 1-10--- A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

² The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him--
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of power,
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD--
³ and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;
⁴ but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.
⁵ Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

⁶ The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.

⁷ The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.

⁸ The infant will play near the hole of the cobra,
and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest.

⁹ They will neither harm nor destroy

on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁰ In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.

Isaiah 11:1-10 (NIV)

Jesses was the father of David, and this means that Jesus Christ was the Son of David, the promised Messiah.

Lenski – the hidden root sent up this new royal Prince or Victor

Therefore – the Messiah is able to know and to reveal the secrets of God, and to preside over the working out of his purposes in the events of history.

5:6 ⁶ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

Barclay – Here is the supreme moment of this vision – the emergence of the Lamb in the scene of heaven.

Christ is called the Lamb 29 times in Revelation. This is the only place Lamb (agnion) is used for Christ in the NT. AMNOS = Lamb, which is used other places in the Bible for Christ. John 1:29 John the Baptist, the lamb takes away the sin of the world. Peter – lamb with out blemish and spot I Peter 1:19. Isaiah 53:7 lamb brought to the slaughter.

1. lamb still bears the marks of having been slain.

2. lamb with marks of sacrifice still on it.

a. 7 horns = omnipotence

OT horns stood for a. power and b. honour.

b. 7 eyes = omniscience

the eyes of the Lord which range through the whole earth. From Zechariah 4:10 – there is not place on earth which is not under the eye of God. Majesty and meekness of Jesus.

Lenski – the center of this vision is the Lamb. The Lamb on the glassy sea, the significant is not clear. Standing in the center = the symbol of power, rule and domination, plus the 4 living ones as the agents of infinite providence. The only one alone who is able to open the book.

Here in Revelation the word for lamb is different than those used in the gospels where Christ was called the lamb of God. Some have used this for an argument that the word should be translated ram... but the word translated means lamb. Lenski says that the word usage has to do with the Greek translation and nothing more.

Standing, not lying nor sitting. Lying is what a slain animal does. Christ was slain, but is alive! Sitting on the throne refers to ruling. Standing = readiness.

The seven (eyes and horns) remind us not to operate with common physical notions.

The Horn is the symbol of might. 7 horns symbolize God's power as being directed to the world of men. Matt 28:18 - Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Matt 28:18 (NIV)

Eyes – symbolize sight, intelligence & wisdom.

The seven eyes are interpreted for us so that we many not fail to understand.

Palmer – Lamb here is a little, other places in the NT the lamb of God is seen as an adult lamb.

This Lamb is able to see all seven of His churches and the whole world through the Holy Spirit who proceeds from Him. This is John's interpretation of the seven eyes.

Preachy----

This Lamb, who is Jesus Christ, is the One who now takes the scroll. It is not the devil, not the emperor, not even a scheme of history – none of these make sense of the scroll of Creation. It is Jesus Christ who holds history in His hand, therefore, whatever fears John or his readers have in their hearts about life or death must be radically refocused. The one to fear is the Lamb.

MacArthur – Little lamb or pet lamb. From the Passover, when Jewish families were required to keep the sacrificial lamb as a house hold pet for four days before sacrificing it.

Christ is only referred as a lamb **once** in the OT Isa 53:7 and in the NT out side of Revelation, **4 times** John 1:29; 36; Acts 8:32; I Peter 1:19. in revelation **31** times.

Standing = alive

7 = perfect omniscience and complete understanding and knowledge.
7 Spirits of God = Holy Spirit send out searching for guilty, unrepentant sinners to be judged. John 16:8

Verse 7

⁷ He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. ⁸ And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sang a new song:

"You are worthy to take the scroll

and to open its seals,

because you were slain,

and with your blood you purchased men for God

from every tribe and language and people and nation.

¹⁰ You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,

and they will reign on the earth."

¹¹ Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. ¹² In a loud voice they sang:

"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,

to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength

and honor and glory and praise!"

¹³ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing:

"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb

be praise and honor and glory and power,

for ever and ever!"

¹⁴ The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Barclay –Verse 7 -- it is necessary to look at this passage as a whole.

Here is the greatest chorus of praise the universe can ever hear. It comes in 3 waves

1. praise of the 4 living creatures and of the 24 elders
2. praise of the myriads of angels
3. praise of every living creature.

Here is the truth that heaven and earth and all that is within them is designed for the praise of Jesus Christ.

Lenski – **“he came”** - the dramatic historical perfect

“has taken” – visualizes the book as now being in possession of the lamb.

MacArthur – the views the great, culminating act of history, the act that will signal the end of man’s day. Same scene described by Daniel in Daniel 7:13-14

Palmer – it is Jesus Christ who holds history in His hand and, therefore, whatever fears John or his readers have in their hearts about life or death must be radically refocused. *“Yes, it is Christ who says that last word, and it is this Jesus Christ who has died for us and now lives to be our advocate” Rom 8:31-39*

Verse 8

Barclay – 24 elders = represent all that is in nature and in the universal church.

Interesting picture; elders have **harps**... to which in old days the psalms were sung. (the harp stands for the music of praise as the Jews knew it.)

Golden bowls full of incense... incense is the prayers of God’s dedicated people.

The thought is the idea of intermediaries in prayer

(Daniel 6:2 Draw near unto God and to the angel that intercedeth for you, for he is a mediator between god and man.)

MacArthur – harp = OT worship.... Golden bowls full of incense = wide-mouthed bowls were used in the tabernacle and the temple, connected with the altar. They symbolized the priestly work of intercession for the people.

Lenski – the taking of the book refers to the act of proceeding to convert its contents into reality. (the vision does not intend to portray a great moment in the year 95 which John was permitted to witness.

Note:

It is the saints on earth that offer the incense of prayers, not glorified saints in heaven. These elders represent the agents of the Word operating on earth and not in heaven. Praying saints.

Verse 9

⁹ And they sang a new song:

"You are worthy to take the scroll

and to open its seals,

because you were slain,

and with your blood you purchased men for God

from every tribe and language and people and nation.

Barclay – new song for new mercies of God. Jesus brings into life a quality which has never existed before, new joy, new thrill, new strength, new peace. (the opposite of a Christian world is a world grown old and sad)

Sacrificial death = death with purpose.

Not an accident, not a tragic death... but a death to restore.

Emancipating death = liberation of mankind, to rescue man from sin.

Universal = benefits for man and women of every race. From a God who loves the world.

Availing death = He did not die for nothing.

He made us 1. kings = royalty

2. priests = ability to approach God

3. gave us triumph = we shall reign

Lenski – the song is new only because of its contents. The Lamb has been slain... the price of his blood has bought the saints, the promise full filled. Christ's sacrificial death makes him the Mighty One who brings the kingdom to its consummation of glory and triumph.

A tremendous price: to pay with his blood, more than being slain. **The effect of our purchase extends to this creature world as the effect of our fall did.** That is all. Tribes = those who are alike. Those who are the true church, those who accept the price the blood has paid.

MacArthur – it must have been a thrilling, exhilarating realization for Jon that the redeemed would one day include people from all over the world. Remember that 5 of the 7 churches had serious and potentially fatal problems in Revelation 2 and 3. The knowledge that persecution and sin would not extinguish the spreading flame of Christianity must have brought joy and hope to the apostle's heart.

Palmer – The "new" then has the connotation of the surprising gift of life and hope in the face of danger. It also becomes part of the fulfillment language of Revelation.

This is the universal relevance of Christ's salvation.

Verse 10

¹⁰ You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

Palmer – kingdom and priest were used to describe God's people in chapter 1:6

Lenski – to reign, signify what is the result of the Lamb's making the saints a kingdom. Do we reign now? What about the devil? Was answered in verse 6 of chapter 1.... In Christ we reign now as the kingdom of God – we are not a bunch of little kings doing our own thing, but as unity = kingdom to worship God.

MacArthur – During the millennial kingdom, believers will reign upon the earth with Christ. 2 Tim 2:12 and Rev 20:6

Verse 11

¹¹ Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.

Barclay – refers back to 1 Chronicles 29:10-12 where David sang of thanksgiving to God. Now the angels sing of the possessions of Christ in his glory. 7 possessions

1. Power – He is able
2. Riches – His promises are backed by his wealth
3. Wisdom – He alone has
4. Strength – there is no situation with which he cannot cope.
5. Honor – all will give him His due honor
6. Glory – belongs to God alone
7. Blessings –climax of it all

When we think of what the death and life of Jesus Christ has done for men, it is no wonder that the living creatures and the elders burst into praise.

Lenski – Angels is to be understood literally. This is the passage that distinguishes the angels from the four living ones. Myriads of myriads = 10 thousands multiplied by 10 thousands. (greater than ever before- Heb 12:22 and Dan. 1:10 speak of myriads 10 thousand) Myriads of Myriads is indefinitely.

MacArthur – for the fourth time in this chapter, John says he saw something. Angels added, the highest number the Greeks had was Myriads. Uncountable number. They number at least twice as many as the fallen angels (demons) according to Revelation 12:3-4.

Verse 12

.¹² In a loud voice they sang:
"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!"

Barclay – see notes on verse 11

Lenski – this is cried out in the third person so it means that all agree. Glory, Honor, and Power were in 4:11 now wealth, wisdom strength and praise are added to bring the number to 7 = deity plus humanity. The first four: **power, riches, wisdom, strength are**

objective, the last three: honor, glory, and blessings are subjective as being offered to the Lamb by others.

All seven pertain alike to each of the seven seals.

MacArthur – Once again, the emphasis is on the death of Christ which provided a perfect redemption. The seven areas are where his is worthy to receive recognition.

Verse 13

¹³ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing:

"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power,
for ever and ever!"

Lenski – Creature emphasizes the connection with the Creator, by his act of creation called every one of them into existence. The 1st in 4:11 glorifies the creator, the 2nd, this one, glorify both the one sitting on the throne and the Lamb.

Barclay – John shows highest praise to Christ is that the praise is sung to both, joined together. Two things to note in the song.

1. The living sing praise

2. The dead sing praise

- a. All sing praise, here is a vision that all is in the reign of the Risen Christ. Even from beyond the death the chorus of praise rises to him.

MacArthur – As the great hymn of praise reaches a crescendo, all join in. The creation is unable to contain its joy over its imminent redemption. Rom 8:19-22

Verse 14

Lenski – after each ascription there was heard a pause, then the tremendous Amen! Was heard as the seal. Amen – let it be, make it happen... they kept saying.