

The Study of the Book of Revelation

The Scroll with Seven Seals

Chapter 5

The significance of this chapter is summarized by Ellen White: *“The fifth chapter of Revelation needs to be closely studied. It is of great importance to those who shall act a part in the work of God for these last days.”* Testimonies for the church, v. 9, p. 267

Revelation 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.”

“a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals”

The focus in verse one is the book that is in the right hand of the Father that is seated on the throne. The word “book” comes from the Greek word “Biblion” meaning a roll. Writings in John’s day were written on parchment paper, then rolled on a stick, and were called scrolls. These writings were not only written within and rolled up, but on the backside (outside) they were sealed with seven seals. We need to remember that the Bible was not written with punctuations. Therefore, the comma placed after backside should be removed. The writing was on the inside and rolled up, then sealed with seven seals. If the writing was also on the backside, that part could be read without removing the seals.

“sealed with seven seals.”

In our study of Revelation chapters 2 and 3, we saw the seven churches, pictured at the candlesticks, in the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. The number seven in the Bible is a complete number. The seven churches brought us through seven periods of church history, from the time of the ascension of Christ back to the heavenly sanctuary, to the second coming of Christ. We now see a scroll that has messages covering the same historical time periods as the seven churches, but it is sealed. As we will see in chapter six, each time a seal is unlocked or opened, it reveals more information. Therefore, the scroll was written and sealed in such a way as to open more information about the condition of the church with the unlocking of each seal.

Revelation 5:2-4

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? 3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. 4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.”

“a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice,”

When a message is proclaimed with a loud voice, it is intended that all the earth should hear. When the question is asked, “Who is worthy to open the book, and loose the seals thereof?” no man or being in heaven or in earth was able. Here we see John’s compassionate side, as wept much. He senses the scroll is important to understanding what is going to take happen to God’s Church (His people) down through time.

Revelation 5:5-6

“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. 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.

“the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed”

The Lion from Juda, the Root of David, is none other than Jesus. When He died on the cross and was resurrected, He had secured the right to claim every man, woman, and child as His own! He had lived a sinless life on this earth, and then when He ascended back to heaven to continue His ministry in our behalf, He had prevailed and was found to be the only One worthy to open the seals.

Another interesting point is that, only a Priest could enter the Sanctuary. And only a King could receive the Scroll to Rule. In Ancient Israel, a Priest came from the tribe of Levi. The King came from the tribe of Judah. Only a King-Priest can enter the Sanctuary and take the Covenant Scroll himself. In the Old Testament, no King from Judah could ever enter the Sanctuary (the Most Holy Place, where the Law was kept).

2 Chronicles 26:16-21

*“But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, that were valiant men: And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, **It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God. Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him. And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD: and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land.”***

Key Point:

The Messiah was prophesied to be a Priest AND a King. Jesus resolves this dilemma, Jesus is this Priest-King.

Zechariah 6:12-13

“And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.”

Hebrews 6:19-7:1

*“Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, **made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;***

Revelation 5 portrays Jesus as the King-Priest after the Order of Melchisedec. Jesus entered the Heavenly Sanctuary at His Ascension, and received the Heavenly Scroll. (Rev. 5:5-10)

“stood a Lamb as it had been slain,”

The Lion of Judah (v.5) is a Lamb (v.6) and this Lamb was *“Slain.”*

“had been slain” - A Greek Word Study

“Had Been Slain” in the Greek is in a Perfect Passive Participle form. It suggests an eternal, or continuous suffering. This Greek verb suggests that Christ, died once for all (Hebrews 10:10-12) in the Past, and His suffering still continues in the Present. On this phrase, Adam Clarke says: *“As if now in the act of being offered. This is very remarkable; so important is the sacrificial offering of Christ in the sight of God, that He is still represented as being in the very act of pouring out His blood for the offenses of man.”*

Hebrews 10:10-12

“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;”

In the book, Symposium on Revelation, book 1, Jon Paulien writes, *“The Lamb is the exalted Christ of Revelation 1-3, who is qualified to take the book, not only on account of what He had done (His death on the cross), but on account of who He is. Thus, implicit in the text is the full divinity and humanity that the Lamb had to embody in order to carry out the redemptive task. The Lamb’s humanity is evident in that He was slain. His divinity is evident in that He is exalted to the throne of God to receive the worship of all creation.”*

The Lamb is in the middle of the throne, the four living beings, and the 24 elders. He is divine. He is the Captain of the host of heaven. This Lamb is symbolic, because no earthly lamb has seven horns and seven eyes. This Lamb is worthy because He overcame sin, and through His blood, we have forgiveness. Only by the merits of Christ may we enter the heavenly sanctuary by faith.

“having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God”

The seven horns, seven eyes, and seven Spirits of God, are all the same. Christ’s work is connected to the work of the Holy Spirit. This shows us how important the work of the Holy Spirit is to the church.

John 16:7-8

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter (Holy Spirit) will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:”

Acts 1:4-5

“And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”

Acts 1:8

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

Revelation 5:7-8

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

“golden vials full of odours,”

The Greek word for “vials” is “*phiale*” (pronounced fee-al'-ay). According to the historian Josephus, a phiale of incense was placed on the showbread in the sanctuary. This would place the seven seals at the table of showbread in the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. Remember, the vials are in the hands of the 24 elders. In our last study we learned that, just as the Old Testament Sanctuary had 24 assistants, so the Heavenly Sanctuary had 24 assistants made up of those that have been redeemed from the earth. What could be more appropriate than that our Lord should be assisted in His priestly work for the human race by noble members of the race whose holiness of life, and purity of character, had fitted them to be raised up for that purpose?

HEAVENS RESPONSE TO CHRIST’S VICTORY IS WORSHIP AND SONG

Revelation 5:9-10

“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; {Ref. Rev. 14:6} 10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

“they sung a new song,”

The word “*They*” here would refer to the 24 elders that were redeemed from the earth. Remember in our last study we learned that when Jesus was raised from the dead, many sleeping saints arose also.

Matthew 27:50-53

“Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And **the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.”**

Ephesians 4:8

“Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” The R.S.V. reflects a better reading of the Greek in Ephesians 4:8 “Therefore it is said, “When he ascended on high he **led a host of captives**, and he gave gifts to men.”

John sees that “*they*” (24 elders) have “*Harp*s,” and claim the Jesus has redeemed them to God by the shedding of His blood. If Jesus redeemed them by His death on the cross, then the twenty-four elders had to have lived on this earth! They now have become Jesus’ assistants in the heavenly sanctuary.

Revelation 5:11

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;

“ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;”

This term is not meant to be a literal count of angels in heaven, but rather term is used to mean an innumerable number. Though the angels haven't experienced redemption, they have cooperated with Christ in the salvation of mankind. All heaven works with Christ to restore fallen humanity to the image of God.

Revelation 5:12-14

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.*** ***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.*** ***14*** And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.”

Notice the correlation of this scene of Revelation 5:12 to that in Daniel 7:13-14:

Daniel 7:13-14

“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

Daniel describes a picture of Christ when He receives His kingdom, as a result of the judgment. He receives: 1. Dominion 2. Glory 3. A Kingdom

In Revelation 5:12, John describes SEVEN Attributes of Christ's victory:

1. Power
2. Riches
3. Wisdom
4. Strength
5. Honor
6. Glory
7. Blessing

KEY POINT:

The first six attributes are His by nature, as Eternal God. The seventh attribute is only His as it is received in the Willing Obedience and Worship of His People.

The seven seals could only be opened because of the worthy sacrifice of the Lamb. The working out of the plan of redemption could never start without the cross. The full benefits of salvation may now be freely offered to all because One was worthy to open the scroll. This brings assurance that in the end, God's righteous judgment will deliver His people and put an end to sin forever. Before Jesus appears as the Judge of all men, He is first revealed as their Savior and Redeemer. The Father, the angelic hosts of heaven, and the redeemed all agree that He is worthy to be worshiped. The great controversy involves worship, and the grand throne room scene reminds us that only the Creator is rightly worship by His creatures. As self if forgotten and Jesus is given first place in your heart and lives, real worship takes place.