

Revelation 5 Worthy Is the Lamb

Introduction:

Read Chapter 4 as a lead in to Chapter 5.

A Look at the Passage:

5:1 Him who sat on the throne This would be God the Father.

A scroll written inside and on the back The inside would be the front. Normally scrolls were only written on one side. The writing on both sides signifies the fullness of the contents.

Sealed with seven seals Important documents like wills or contracts were often sealed with wax seals as a means of security. A 3D imprint was pushed into the warm wax to form a seal.

What is the scroll? There are several good thoughts on this from different commentators.

1. The Lamb's Book of Life. This makes sense from the standpoint of Jesus being the one who is worthy to open it. It also does justice to the fullness of the contents. (written inside and on the back). Once the seals are opened, however, judgment is the result. Connecting judgment with the opening of the Book of Life is a difficulty.
2. The title deed to the earth. This view makes sense of the judgments as Christ claims the earth back for Himself from both Satan and those inhabitants of it who have rebelled against him. The fact that the title deed is not in Satan's hands, but in the right hand of God the Father, would show that the earth is the Lord's even though Satan has been exercising a great deal of authority over it for a very long time. The Father is ultimately giving the earth to the Son.
3. The book of the prophecies leading up to the end. This makes sense from a few angles. The fullness of the contents would speak of the completeness of the vision. In the OT, the prophet Daniel was also given visions of the end, but was told to shut up the words and seal the book. Now such a book is being opened. As the scroll is opened by Jesus, the prophecies unfold. The fact that the Father gives Jesus the prophecies would also tie in with Rev 1:1, God the Father gives the Revelation to Jesus Christ.

5:2 Who is worthy? The angel's question is the key to the chapter.

5:3 No one was found. The prophecies will not unfold. The earth will not be reclaimed. Ultimately, the human race would remain in the bondage of Satan, sin and death with no hope of deliverance.

5:4 I wept much Given humanity's all too tragic history, John had ample cause for weeping. No one was found who could rescue us from the awful situation we find ourselves in – until **v.5.**

5:5 The Lion of the tribe of Judah The reference goes all the way back to Genesis.

Genesis 49:8-10 *“Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father’s children shall bow down before you. ⁹ 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? ¹⁰ The scepter 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.*

Root of David can refer either to “source” or “offspring.” Jesus is the descendant of David, but also the source of David’s authority. In **Psalms 110**, David calls the Messiah “Lord.”

5:6 Since the Lion of Judah and the Root of David has prevailed, we might now expect to see this conquering lion. Instead, in the middle of this majestic scene, we see **a lamb**. He is alive, but bears the marks of His death. Christ won the victory for all of us by submitting to His death on the cross. The sacrificed lamb and the conquering lion are one and the same.

Seven horns speak of His strength.

Seven eyes represent the Holy Spirit who proceeds from both the Father and the Son. He is such an integral part of the living God that He is represented as the Lamb’s very eyes. Don’t imagine that the Holy Spirit is some lesser being or impersonal spiritual force. The seven-ness of Him points to the completeness and diversity of His work.

Isaiah 11:1-2 ¹ *There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots. ² The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.*

Alexander MacLaren comments,

“Water will take the shape of any vessel into which you choose to pour it; the Spirit of God assumes the form that is imposed upon it by our weaknesses and needs. And if you want to know the exhaustless variety of the seven Spirits which the Lamb gives, find out the multiplicity and measure, the manifoldness and the depth, of man’s necessities, of weakness, of sorrow, and sin, and you will know how much the Spirit of God is able to bestow and still remain full and unexhausted.”

5:7 The Lamb takes possession of the scroll.

5:8-10 The worship begins. There are bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. Your prayers are perfume to God. Even the sad ones are very pleasant to Him. David once prayed and said,

Psalms 141:1-2 ¹ *Lord, I cry out to You; Make haste to me! Give ear to my voice when I cry out to You. ² Let my prayer be set before You as incense, The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.*

Chuck Smith comments,

“How God loves for you to commune with Him! How He loves for you to just sit down and open your heart to Him, expressing to Him your love and worship! He hears your prayers, and they are a sweet smell to Him. They are precious to Him.”

Christ’s sacrifice is the focal point of the worship here pictured in heaven. Look at the words of this song of the redeemed. They come “out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.” All the families of the earth are blessed by the blood of Christ.

Genesis 12:1-3 ¹Now the Lord had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you. ² I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Redeemed us to God Christ purchased us with his blood. He paid our ransom. He bought us. The *Complete Word Study Dictionary* explains,

“The consequence of something or someone having been bought is that the buyer has the right of possession. In the redemptive work of Christ the idea is that Christ, by offering Himself for us as due satisfaction, freed us from our liability in paying it ourselves. He, having paid the price, binds us to Himself.”

5:11-12 An innumerable company of angels joins in.

Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands This is the ancient Greek way of saying “a whole bunch.” John sees more angels than he can count.

5:13-14 Now all of creation joins in.

Philippians 2:8-11 ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. ⁹Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Warren Wiersbe comments:

“He shared in the sinless weaknesses of humanity as He hungered, thirsted, and became weary. Today in glory, He possesses all strength. On earth, He experienced humiliation and shame as sinners ridiculed and reviled Him. They laughed at His kingship and attired Him in a mock robe, crown, and scepter. But all of that is changed now! He has received all honor and glory!”

Theories of the Atonement (mostly from Millard Erickson):

1. **Atonement as an Example:** In its most extreme form, people who speak of Christ's death in this way actually deny His deity. Nonetheless, Christ certainly sets the bar high by example alone. If we look to Him and His suffering and are reminded that He asks us to love one another as He has loved us, then we all have a long way to go. This is not the deepest truth which we glean from the death of Christ, but it is certainly one part of the picture.
2. **The Moral Influence Theory:** The advocates of the moral-influence theory emphasize that God's nature is essentially love. The focus is then placed on the fact that human attitudes keep them apart from God. If God loves us so much, how can we remain distant from Him? This idea can get imbalanced if we minimize such qualities as justice, holiness, and righteousness – all of which play into the meaning of the death of Christ.
3. **The Atonement as a Demonstration of Divine Justice:** The moral law of God is serious business. We cannot disregard it. This theory, also called the "governmental theory" emphasizes the seriousness of sin. Justice must be satisfied. A further point is made that Christ's death is seen as a deterrent to sin by impressing on the sinner the gravity of what is involved in sin. Again, all good, but there is more.
4. **Penal Substitutionary Atonement:** This outlook takes the concept of divine justice one step further and actually states that Jesus died in our place. Christ, being both God and sinless human, did not deserve death. Therefore, when he offered His life to God on behalf of the human race of which he was a part, he went beyond what was required of him. Thus, it could serve as a genuine satisfaction to God for humanity's sins. The death of the God-man himself has infinite value and compensates for the price of our sins.
5. **The Ransom Theory:** This view sees the Atonement as Victory over all the Forces of Sin and Wickedness. In the cosmic struggle between the forces of good and evil, Satan established control over humanity. We were his slaves and, consciously or unconsciously, we were prone to act in his service rather than the service of God. Christ's death freed us from Satan's power. Our great enemy has been defeated. By the end of the book of Revelation, he will find his eternal home in the lake of fire.

All of this helps to explain why there is so much praise being offered to the Lamb that was slain, the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

Conclusions:

Worship as a Logical Response:

- If we consider for a moment the sheer awesomeness of Christ, we would have ample reason to worship Him. But what more can we do to cultivate that worshipful heart, one that would have praise spontaneously springing out of it?
- One way might be to start with the reality of sin, which is the reason the atonement is needed.
- Since all of us have sinned, we all stand flawed and imperfect before God. Our rebellion has corrupted us and there is nothing we can do to remedy our situation.
- Nonetheless, we still have some idea of justice. When someone sins against us, we inherently know that something is wrong. But now consider that each of us in sinning against God has sinned against perfect love and holiness Himself.
- The slavery that we found ourselves in was our own doing. It was our choice to be held in bondage. Our rebellion against God, was rebellion against love itself. He wanted our best and we placed ourselves in bondage to God's enemy. Satan, Sin and Death are all our enemies too and we placed ourselves under their authority.
- Thus, we've offended our Creator who loved us. We found ourselves in bondage to the most wicked master in the universe, who hated us thoroughly – not least for being made in the image of his arch enemy God. He rebelled against God before we did.
- And now consider this: Christ died for our sins. He is the sinless, spotless Lamb that was slain. He suffered and died on the cross for no other reasons than His loving obedience to the Father and His great love and compassion toward us.
- God made us in His image and then became like us Himself. He then identifies with us in His death and – in so doing – frees us from the bondage of Satan, sin and death.
- Let us be reminded that the triune God was lacking nothing without us. It was not any need of His own, but our need that sent Christ to the cross. He died for us because He wanted to see us saved.
- And what could be greater than this? Just read **5:9-10** again. Now let's read **5:9-14** and in our hearts join in with all of creation in praising Him.
- In our position as the redeemed, is there any logical response other than worship?

But a final question: Have you made Christ's payment for your sins your very own?