

THE SEVEN SEALED SCROLL Revelation 5:1-14

THE PROCLAMATION: “*Who is Worthy to open the Scroll?*” Revelation 5:1-2

The word "book" is the word *biblion* which could be a book with leaves or a scroll. The reference here is to a scroll because it is rolled out and would be made of lamb's skin or papyrus. It is recorded that it would take 500 lamb skins' to write the whole Bible and it would take a scribe 15 years to copy it. A scroll was written generally written on only one side, but a similar scroll is described in Ezekiel 2:9-10 which was written on both sides. A scroll is read by slowly unrolling one side to the other. As the scroll is unrolled one by one the judgments of God are revealed, beginning with the Seal Judgments, followed by the Trumpet and Bowl Judgments.

The scroll of Revelation 5 is a unique scroll which God has sealed with seven seals. God revealed to Daniel the events that precede the Second Coming of the Messiah in the Tribulation by sending Michael the Arch angel to answer his questions (Dan.12:8-9). Daniel did not understand all he was told and ask in verse eight, "*what shall be the end of these things.*" He was told to, ". . . *go thy way . . . the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end*" which indicates that until the events recorded here occur, the seals has been closed. This scroll is in heaven and remains sealed, however it will be opened by Christ at the beginning of the Tribulation. Revelation 5:1, states that these things were written in the scroll are now to be brought out to be opened. This will occur at the beginning of the seven year Tribulation, Daniel's 70th Week. Daniel 12:10 explains, "*many be purified, made white...others remain wicked.*" In other words the opening of the seals in the Tribulation would have a twofold effect; the salvation of many (purified) and the revealing of the wicked who will not repent. Also, the "wise" will understand these events, but the wicked will not.

In the Tribulation, the "saints" or those who realize that Jesus is the Messiah believe the Scriptures and the witness of the 144,000 saved Jews to will preach Jesus as the Messiah. These are people who believe and accept Jesus Christ as their Savior after the rapture of Christians of the Church Age. At the beginning of the Tribulation only unsaved people will be on earth due to Christian being raptured. But at the same time many will not believe and will reject Christ openly and their wicked hearts will be revealed. Because the scroll was written on both sides nothing could be added.

Further in this study we shall see that these seven seals are the first of the judgments that God will pour out upon the earth. In Revelation 6:1, it is the Christ, Lamb of God who has been declared worthy to open the book and the Seal Judgments are poured out on the earth. (Rev. 5:5)

In Revelation 5:2, the proclamation's question is, "*Who is worthy to open the book,*

and loose the seals thereof?" It is clear no man is worthy and could open the seals. All men are sinners and sold unto sin. There is no righteousness man among men and thus no man to be the world's savior and pay its sin debt.

In Roman times, seven seals were used in Roman wills. The will could only be opened by the heir. Hebrew 1:2 says that Christ is heir to all things. Leviticus 25:23-28 sets forth the law of a kinsman redeemer. An Israelite who lost his land could have his near relative redeem his property. Israel's debt is that they willingly sold themselves into sin and are unable to pay their sin debt and redeem themselves. 1 John 2:2 says that Christ, who is our kinsman redeemer, was our "*propitiation*" (which means He made the full payment for our sin and also for the whole world). However, here the principle is being applied only to Israel, because at this time the body and bride of Christ (all Christians saved in this present dispensation of the Church Age) are in heaven with the Lord. It is vital to understand that this event and the seven year Tribulation is related to solely to Israel. The Bride of Christ, or Body of Christ found in churches in this dispensation are not present during the Tribulation and nothing revealed is related to Church Age believers.

An example of the law of the redeemer can be seen when Jeremiah prophesied and told Jerusalem to surrender to the Babylonians. He explained that it was God's judgment that they be taken into captivity out of the land because of their disobedience. The Jews considered Jeremiah a traitor and cast him into prison. His cousin, Hanameel (Jer. 32:7), believed Jeremiah and saw the Babylonian invasion would make his land worthless. So he went to prison and offered to sell it to Jeremiah. God told Jeremiah he should make an offer and purchase it. Why? As a sign of the return to Jerusalem (Jeremiah 29:8-14, 30:3). Hanameel knew the law and was making provision to be able to have his land returned at the end of the Babylonian captivity. Jeremiah would have to return it to him in the year of the year of the Jubilee. (Lev. 25:9-51; 27:17-14)

Jesus is a Jew and as the Messiah He is Israel's kinsman redeemer. Israel sinned and lost for a time its inheritance, **but not forever!** Christ their Messiah will redeem them as God has promised. This takes place at the end of the Tribulation and in the Millennium when Christ rules the world. In the year of Jubilee, the land and possessions lost would be returned to the original owner under Mosaic Law. The Jubilee was every 50th year. Freedom was proclaimed for all Israelites who had been sold into slavery to their countrymen. All ancestral possessions sold because of poverty were returned. This Sabbatical year was also a year of rest for the land and was in addition to Sabbatical years which God told them to set aside every seven years. Every seven years God told Israel not plant crops and let their land lay fallow. During the Sabbatical year they were to live off what God had provided during the previous year. In the sixth year they were to store grain and food for the seventh. The observance of the Sabbatical year was an act of faith, whereby they would in obedience, be trusting God to provide for their needs. The forty nine Sabbatical years ended in the fifth year of the Jubilee. Nowhere in history or the Bible is there any indication that Israel ever kept the Jubilee, however Christ

as their kinsman redeemer will restore to them the land and the promises God made to them.

THE SEARCH FOR THE ONE WHO IS WORTHY. Revelation 5:3

The scroll deals with the last seven years of Israel's judgment and redemption which is the Great Tribulation. The purpose of the Tribulation is that from these judgments comes redemption. This book is the title deed and describes God's final actual acts of redemption for Israel's inheritance. The question is who is able to pour out the seven seal judgments to purify the earth, thus accomplishing God's plan for Israel? Verse 3 proclaims that no man was found. This simple statement shows the worth of man and his ability to save himself. None was found in heaven, earth, or under the earth and John then began to weep. He yearned to see creation free from bondage of sin and his beloved people Israel redeemed from their sin and rejection of the Messiah. The curse God placed on the earth at the Fall of Man (Gen. 3:14-19) must be removed and the Millennium Kingdom and reign of Christ be fulfilled as God promised. John wanted to see these promises of God to Israel fulfilled. Unless there was One who was worthy both Israel and the world was doomed!

In the ancient Roman world, a will (a *Praetorian Testament*) was sealed with the seals of seven witnesses to attest to the validity of the will. A *praetor* was a Roman magistrate, a judge. When Jesus was examined by Pilate this was done in the praetorium or judgment hall (John 18:28,33; 19:9) Therefore, in heaven (space), the earth or under the earth no one was found who was the legal Mediator (*Praetor*) who could open the seals and reveals the contents of the scroll.

John weeps because he knows the significance of the opening of the scroll. Unless one is found to open the scroll the events of the Tribulation could not occur. This would mean that God's promises to Israel and the world of the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ would not happen. John then begins to weep violently indicating that he knew the promised prophecies of God and longed for them to unfold. However, without One who was pure, perfect and holy the scrolls would not be opened and therefore prophecy would fail and mankind would be lost. John surely knew of the promises of God and of His faithfulness to fulfill all He has stated. It appears John may have been overtaken by the absolute truth and magnitude of the hopelessness of man being able to save himself. John was weeping for mankind similar to Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*" (Matthew 23:37)

In verse 5 one of the twenty four elders tells John not to weep and proclaims that Jesus Christ, of the tribe of Judah and the Root of David has prevailed and will

open the seals! Heaven is not weeping for they know that Christ does reign and that sin and death are conquered. Those in heaven wait patiently, even at this hour, for the opening of that scroll which begins the events that lead to Christ's return and His kingdom on earth. We all should weep at the failure of man, but rejoice in knowing Christ our Redeemer.

Note that in verse 5, Christ is not described as bridegroom, but root of David! The events here are focused on Israel and this is further evidence of Pre-Tribulation Rapture. The Church Age saints are not in view during the Tribulation and at this time the all Christians are in Heaven and the scroll has to do with God's final dealings with Israel. The church age saints are present in Heaven already being redeemed.

BOLD IS THE WORTHY ONE, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. Rev. 5:6-7.

From the midst of throne, from midst of God this heavenly scene unfolds and standing center stage is the slain Lamb of God. John turned to see a mighty Lion (Rev. 5:5), but instead he sees a Lamb. The Lion was the Lamb (Rev. 5:6). What a shame that Israel rejected Christ, because He appeared to them as a Lamb, led to the slaughter, not the mighty Lion they wanted to throw off Roman oppression. (See Isaiah 53) Their vision of God's love for them was small and they were only looking for relief from their Roman oppressors when God was offering them the greatest gift a man could have. God was offering freedom from the oppression of sin and eternal life. Israel is still looking for some worldly leader to save and protect her and has not learned the lesson that only God is their true protector.

The Lamb is of the tribe of Judah! In the New Testament, Jesus is referred to as a Lamb. In twenty eight instances, John who refers to Jesus as a Lamb. 1 Peter 1:19 is the only other time He is called a Lamb. The word "*amnos*" is used by John in John 1:29-29. The word stresses Jesus Christ as the sacrificial lamb which God provides for nation of Israel. (See Gen. 22:8, Exod. 12:5, 1 Cor. 12:5) In the New Testament there are two Greek words for lamb. One is the word, "*amnos*," meaning a lamb in general. The other word is "*arnion*," pronounced "r-non" and is symbolically to refer to Christ's character and His substitutional sacrifice for the sins of the world and here of Israel. Jesus' position of being the sacrificial Lamb gives Him His authority to offer redemption and judgment. Thus, in the Tribulation Jesus is offering both salvation and judgment.

Another interesting word is the Greek word for "slain," which is "*sphatts*." It refers to a violent death. It is used in 1 John 3:11-12, describing how Cain slew his brother. Thus, the verse is telling us it was the innocent Lamb that was rejected and brutally slain by Israel who is the only worthy One to open the seals of the book. Horns in Scripture symbolize power and authority. (Deut. 33:17; 1 Sam. 2:10; Psa. 75:10, 89:17 & 24; Zech. 1:18-19).

The number seven in the Bible refers completeness. The seven horns appear to refer to the absolute strength of Lamb which denotes that He is God and Omnipotent (All powerful). The seven eyes are identified as the seven spirits of God which is the seven fold ministry of the Holy Spirit on earth. (See Rev. 1:4, 4:5) This is Jesus the Christ the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Only He is the acceptable sacrifice and worthy. (1 Peter 1:18-19)

Christ boldly takes the scroll from the hand of Him (God the Father) that sat on the throne. (Rev. 5:7) Here Jesus, whom the Jews rejected, is declared the Messiah and the One who will bring about the events leading to the fulfillment of God's promises to them. Christ now takes the position and the twenty four elders fall down and worship Him. *"The stone which the builders rejected is become the head stone of the corner: this is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."* (Psalm 118:22-24). (See Matt 21:42. Christ refers to Himself at the head or chief corner stone) Many incorrectly apply this verse to the present day they are living in, but this verse is speaking of Christ in the beginning of the Tribulation taking His rightful place as the Messiah.

THE WORSHIP OF THE LAMB. Rev. 5:8-14.

The four creatures and the twenty four elders are seen worshiping Christ with praise and thankfulness. The worshipers are the twenty four elders, the four living creatures (v.8), an uncountable number of angels (v. 11) and all creatures and all who under the earth (v.13). In seeing the magnificence of Jesus Christ the beasts and the elders fall down in worshipping the worthy Lamb.

John explains that these worshipers each have a harp and golden vials full of odors which are the prayers of the saints. The playing of harps (a stringed instrument) was an important part of worship in the nation of Israel. (1 Chro. 15:28, 16:5, 25:1, 3, 6, 2 Chro. 9:11, 20:28, 29:25, Neh. 12:27, Job 21:12, Psa. 33:2, 43:4, 49:4, 57:8, 71:22, 81:2) Is it not interesting that so many have grossly misinterpreted this verse to teach singing angels with harps? It was the elders who have been redeemed who are worshiping Christ by singing accompanied by harps.

The "vial" that is referred to would be like the open bowl used in the offering of incense in the Old Testament temple worship. The word "odours" is the word for "incense." Incense was a fragrant substance burned in worship services in the Temple (Exod. 25:6; 30:1-9; 35:8, 28). David express the idea saying, *"Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."* (Psalms 141:2-3) In Revelation 8:3 an angel offer incense in heaven on the

altar with the prayers of the saints. *“And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.”* (Revelation 8:3)

Note that only the twenty four elders who represent the body of Christ are "singing" the new song and have harps. Nowhere in the Bible are angels said to sing or have harps. At the birth of Christ the angels were saying or proclaiming not singing (Luke 2:13-14). Angels in heaven know nothing of the despair of guilt and weight of sin, sorrow, pain, or hurt. Singing is a human expression of emotion and joy.

Revelation 5:9 gives further evidence that these twenty four elders are representative of Church Age believer from all the nations of the earth. It states Christ, *“redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”* Clearly the scope of those saved is greater than just the twenty four elders and seems to indicate their number "twenty four" is representative of all saved people.

This is an emotional scene and singing is used to express visually the worship in the heart of those redeemed. Music vocalizes and expresses the moods of man both minor and major. Winds, waves, trees, storms, are expressed in minor keys and wailing songs are written in minor keys. Folk music, rock, and blues come from the despair in man's soul, but the major notes are happy. Here the major notes are used to praise and worship Christ.

Why the worship? Because Christ is worthy! He could and did pay the price! (1 John 2:2) John 1:29 recorded the declaration of John the Baptist, *“. . . behold the Lamb, which taketh away the sin of the world.”* This is the event all creation has been waiting for, *“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”* Christ has redeemed the Body of Christ, His bride, and now they rejoice in their redemption. Note the theme of this new song. (Vs.9, 12) The Lamb that was slain and the shed blood of Christ are the subjects of the song. Those that deny the blood of Christ and are offended at any reference to it should read and heed the message of this glorious song. We are redeemed to God by the shed blood of the Lamb. Hebrews 9:22, states, *“. . . **without the shedding of blood is no remission of sin.**”*

Today men act as if they will live forever. Yet, here we see a future heavenly scene and only the men who loved Christ will be here! God's judgment is about to fall on wicked rebellious man. Some will be saved during the coming Tribulation, however great numbers will die and be condemned to hell and afterward the Lake of Fire.(See

Rev. 20:15-18)

Revelation 5: 9 describes their song as a **new** song. These redeemed saints will be singing from the heart of their salvation. Oh, what a choir that will be! Their song is of praise to Christ Jesus who made their presence in heaven possible through His atonement of sin. Do you realize that you who are born again and have been saved by God's Grace will be there! You will be a part of this choir in Heaven! Equally true is the fact that those who reject Christ will not be there. Oh, what a call to believe and receive Jesus Christ as one's Savior.

The redeemed who are singing come from every family, language and nation on earth (vs. 10). Note also, that God has made believers both kings and priests who will reign on the Earth. This is good evidence that in the Millennium the New Testament saints (Church Age believers) will have positions of leadership in the Kingdom Christ will set up. Verse 11 says the number here refers to a great number that have been saved during the Church Age. What a day this will be when Christ Jesus our Lord will be worshiped in such a glorious way. What a wonderful thing to look forward to as a believer and child of God to be able to take part in this wonderful event.

What a sharp contrast the heavenly scene of Revelation 5:11-14 presents as compared with the rebellious world today that scoffs and mocks the name and person of Christ. Now the mouths of those that have denied His deity and total work of God's grace are about to be shut forever! Christ in all His power now comes to take His rightful place and in all His marvelous power begins to rule this world and purge it of rebellion and rejection. How frustrating it is today to proclaim Christ to a lost and dying world that ridicules and denounces Him. How disheartening to preach that salvation is not by the works of man, but by belief in Christ, and that He paid the debt we could not pay, and yet see false churches and false teachers continue to teach that a man can redeem himself by his own good works, church membership, baptism, etc. That which all redeemed men for ages have longed for is accomplished. Christ is declared worthy, the Lamb of God, the Lion of Judah and He is come to finally bring judgment on the ungodly and salvation to those that believe. The Lamb and His Word are vindicated! He is proclaimed the both the Righteous Judge and the Savior of the world.

What a joyous time it will be when one hundred million voices proclaim the glory and praise of the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. All in heaven, the beasts, the angels and the twenty four elders all join in proclaiming that Jesus Christ is the worthy One and there is no other.

How pitiful are the vain attempts of men to offer their works and supposed righteousness to gain God's salvation. What a mockery for any man to think he might earn or merit salvation and thus make little of Christ's suffering and death for sin. Only the Lord Jesus is worthy "*. . . to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.*"

Verse 13 says he hears all God's creation, other than man, also join in praising and honoring the Lord Jesus Christ. Creation knows its Creator even though most men reject Him. Jesus is seen sitting on the throne in all His power and glory and there is no possibility of Him being mistaken for who He is.

The eternality of Jesus Christ is firmly proclaimed as the four beasts say "Amen" or "so be it" showing the absoluteness of the proclamation. The twenty four elders also are seen once again falling down prostrate before the throne and worshiping Jesus who is infinite.