

**"REVELATION MADE RELEVANT"**

*A verse by verse exposition of the Bible's most controversial book*

*Notes are Fr. Ward's personal observations with the exception of the historical background information*

**\*\*\*Brief Review of Revelation 4.**

If chapter one of Revelation provides the foundation for all that follows – *the Revelation of JESUS CHRIST*, and chapters 2 & 3 provide His message of challenge and encouragement to His Church, then chapters 4 & 5 take us to the throne room of heaven. All that will transpire in our world's future is under God's complete control (the theological term for this is *sovereignty*). What happens on earth is first determined in heaven! Moreover, John sees the entire history of the world through the lens of Christ's death, resurrection, and second coming. His return will mark the end of the present age. As John is caught up in the Spirit and brought into the heavenly realm, he witnesses the response of all of creation to their Creator God – worship! If Revelation 4 reflects the creative power of God ("*Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.*"), in this study we will see that Revelation 5 displays God's redemptive power in Jesus Christ.

**III. Worship, Wrath and Witness (Revelation 4-8)**

**A. Worship (Rev. 4-5) – the focus now moves from the Church (Rev. 2-3) to Heaven**

**2. The Scroll and the Lamb (Rev. 5:1-14)**

**v. 1:** "*I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals.*" The vision John sees in chapter 4 continues in this chapter. The One who is on the throne is God the Father. John sees a "book" in His right hand. Although many translations translate the Greek word, *biblion* as "book," it is most likely a scroll. Such scrolls were common in the ancient world. The scroll is also sealed with seven seals. What makes this scroll unique is its wording is on both front and back. In the ancient world, only private documents had writing on both sides. Of more significance, however, is the fact that the Old Testament Covenant Law was written on both sides of the stone tablets. We also read in **Ezek 2:9-10:** "*I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll, which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe.*" Moreover, sealed scrolls could only be opened by the owner of the scroll. Such scrolls were sealed by wax or clay blobs impressed with a signet ring to protect the contents and guarantee the integrity of the writing. Original scrolls were usually sealed but copies were not. In ancient Rome, Roman wills or "testaments" were sealed with six seals, each of which bore the name of the sealer and could only be opened by him. Could this then be a testament of God concerning the promise of the inheritance in His future Kingdom? We will see at the end of the study how all that follows points to the fact that the Scroll does indeed represent the Title Deed for mankind. As a result of the Fall, man lost both his land (the garden) and his inheritance (eternal life). They passed into Satan's hands. Yet, God holds this title deed. It is awaiting redemption or the legal repossession of that which has been lost. How will it be bought back? We also will see that the opening of the seventh seal will reveal of the seven trumpets of judgment upon the earth. Of course, the imagery of each successive seal opening presents the progressive unfolding of God's intervention in the climax of human history. Thus, this scroll in the hand of the Father reveals *what soon must take place* culminating in the coming of His Son, the judgment of the world, and the eternal reward of the saints!

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**vv. 2-3:** *“And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?” 3And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it.”* So, who is “worthy” to open the great scroll and break its seals? In other words, who has the authority and virtue for such a task? A mighty angel shouts out the challenge for someone to come forward. And there is silence! No one anywhere, anytime, or in any way can or could open such a scroll. No created being has the authority or the power to do so.

**vv. 4-5:** *“Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; and one of the elders said to me, “Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.””* As a result, John begins to weep. A feeling of dread and helplessness comes over him because no one can open the scroll and thereby save mankind. Can you imagine the frustration you would feel if you were in trouble and received a life-saving message but you could not open or read it? And yet, one of the 24 elders tells him to stop his weeping. There indeed is One who “has overcome” – *nikao* – lit. “triumphed,” “win a victory” (the Nike sports company gets its name from this same Greek word). While no created being is worthy to open the scroll, God is! The One who is worthy is both the “Lion of the tribe of Judah” and the “Root of David.” These messianic titles (**Gen. 49:9-10; Is. 11:1, 10; Jer. 23:5; 33:5; Rev. 22:16**) point John and the world back to Christ! Jews viewed the imagery of Messiah as the Lion as one who will vindicate His people and destroy the world Gentile powers, in this case, Rome.

**v. 6:** *“And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.”* But instead of seeing an actual lion, John sees a lamb! He sees a lamb (*arnion* – “young sheep”) as if it had been slaughtered but standing in the center of the throne. The conquering warrior Messiah is actually lifted up as a victorious victim. The Messiah is now linked to the OT Passover lamb (**Ex. 12:5-; Jn. 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32; 1 Pet. 1:19**) and the suffering servant of Isaiah (**Is. 42-53**). The Lamb still bears the marks of death (the scars of Christ’s body) and is described with the divine attributes of omnipotence (*seven horns* – symbol of power in the ancient world) omniscience (*seven eyes*) and the *seven Spirits of God* (the Holy Spirit *sent out into all the earth* – represents omnipresence in addition to the other two). Thus, His deity is demonstrated by both being at the center of the throne of God and having the divine eternal attributes of Almighty God. Clearly, both prophetic themes of the Messiah as a Warrior King and a Suffering Servant come together in John’s vision. However, it is the imagery of the Lamb that will be repeated throughout Revelation. For it is only by virtue of Christ’s death that we can pass from judgment to acquittal, from death to life, and it is because of His suffering and sacrifice that He is given the authority by His Father to judge both the living and the dead.

**v. 7:** *“And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.”* The Greek verb that we translate as “took” means to do so in a dramatic way. In other words, it represents decisive and completed action. The Son of God therefore takes the scroll from the Father. He has such authority and power not only as a member of the Triune Godhead and by virtue of what He has accomplished on the cross.

**v. 8:** *“When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.”* We are brought to the heart of the human and angelic response to Who the Lamb is and what He has done – Worship! Like they had done earlier before the Father in **Rev. 4:10**, the 4 living creatures and the 24 elders now acknowledge the deity of the Lamb. The harp is the same instrument as the lyre used with the Psalms (c.f. **Ps. 33:2; 98:50**). The *golden bowls full of incense* represent *the prayers of the saints*. Such prayers are not praises but are petitions (*proseuche*). Why petitions? The answer is found in **Rev. 6:10** where the martyrs are crying out to God for judgment upon those who murdered them, and then in **Rev. 8:3-4** the prayers of the

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saints precede the trumpets of God's judgment. Thus, the prayers of the saints represent the call for God's vindication of the martyred saints. Such vindication will only come through the outpouring of God's wrath and the judgment of the world by Christ. The term "saint" literally means "holy one" and is the general term used throughout the NT (**2 Cor. 1:1; Phil 1:1; Rev. 11:18; 13:7, 19; 19:8; 22:21**) for believers (i.e. those set apart by God's grace for His purposes).

**vv. 9-10: "And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."**

What follows is the first of three hymns of praise by the 4 living creatures and 24 elders. These hymns interpret the symbolism of the scroll and the Lamb. The first two hymns are songs to the Lamb. Note that the two songs in Rev. 4 were directed to God the Father. The final hymn is directed to both the Father and the Lamb (Son)! The "new" aspect of the song highlights a number of spiritual truths which are then declared in the hymn. First, it reflects the unique act of God's grace in the work of the Lamb. Never before has there been anything like it in heaven. Second, it celebrates the inauguration of the "New" Covenant in Christ which is established in His blood – the blood of the Lamb. As such, He alone is worthy to take the scroll and break its seals. Finally, it points us to the reality of God creating a new Kingdom in heaven and on earth as a result of Christ's redemptive work. In Christ, God has redeemed mankind from all corners of the earth and from every ethnic group to be a kingdom and priests to God. In short, we were created to be redeemed by God and to reign on earth. This final statement confirms what was already declared of *Jesus* in **Rev. 1:6** and points to the Millennial rule on earth in **Rev. 20:6 & Is. 11:1-10**.

**vv.11-12: "Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, 12saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."** Now John hears a second hymn directed to the Lamb, this time with "*myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands*" indicating an innumerable number (some translations have 10,000 x 10,000) of angelic beings present similar to what Daniel saw before the Ancient of Days in **Dan. 7:10**. The angels shout out a sevenfold declaration – the first six which reflect the divine qualities of the Lamb, and the seventh which is the expression of true worship. As David declares in **Ps. 34:1**: "*I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.*"

**v. 13: "And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever."** The fifth and final hymn is directed to both the Father (Him who sits on the throne) and the Son (the Lamb). This time EVERY living creature worships the Living God reiterating what was sung earlier. Note the progression of the number of worshippers from the first hymn in **Rev. 4**. What began as worship by the four living creatures now encompasses all of creation! Such an occurrence is echoed by the Apostle Paul in **Philippians 2:9-11**: "***God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.***"

**v. 14: "And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped."** The four supernatural creatures say "Amen" which means "let it be so," to reflect the divine reality that God is sovereign and in total control of accomplishing His plans. We are again brought back to the ultimate and fitting response to Who God is and What He has done – like the 24 elders, all we can do is fall down and

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worship! God's power, love, grace and mercy are simply overwhelming! Moreover, all of the above can be summed up with the words we heard in the first hymn as recorded in **Rev. 4:8b**: ***"Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God, the almighty, who was and who is and who is to come."***

### **Chapter Summary & Personal Application:**

As noted earlier, the fullest understanding of why John sees a scroll and the Lamb is to understand that the scroll represents the Title Deed to earth and eternal life. Man lost both as a result of the Fall. They passed into Satan's possession. God's law in **Lev. 25:23-34** states that a kinsman (family member) may redeem a lost possession. Jesus became our kinsman when He took on flesh and was born of the Virgin Mary. As seen in the account of Boaz and Ruth (**Ruth 4:1-12**), the kinsman who redeems the property was called the "Goel" or redeemer. Thus, Jesus is our Kinsman-Redeemer! He paid the redemptive price with His own blood on the cross (**1 Pet. 1:18-20**). But He has not yet claimed fully what He has purchased. That will come at the end of the age and the breaking of the seals of the Title Deed. When the Lamb leaves the throne to take the scroll from the Father, His mediatorial work will cease, and His redemptive work will begin. And Satan will fight Him every step of the way – he will contest the claim and will not cease until he and his angels are cast into the Lake of fire. We have seen that in human history and it will culminate in the Tribulation period. Finally, in the Gospels, four titles are given to the Lord. He is the Son of David; the Son of Abraham; the Son of Man; and the Son of God. As Son of David, He has title to the throne of David. As Son of Abraham, He has title to the Land of Israel (most of the Middle East!); as Son of Man, He has title to the Earth and the World. As Son of God, He is the heir of all things. He will not take full authority over all of these until His Return. Recall the temptations of our Lord by Satan when he was in the wilderness - to have all the kingdoms of the earth if He would just bow down and worship the devil; and to make a grand entrance into the Temple to let the world know Who He really is! That's the world's way – to take the short cut and to submit to the fleshly desires of immediate gratification rather than to work on the issues of the selfish heart. It also would prevent Christ from buying us back by his blood through the cross. We would remain in our sin, still enslaved by Satan and subject to eternal death and damnation,

*"Jesus paid it all!"* - so goes an old favorite gospel hymn. And then what do we sing? *"All to him I owe."* The witness of God's Word is clear – Jesus is fully God and fully man. This truth is affirmed in Revelation. Christ has completely obtained our salvation (our perfection and wholeness) by His saving work on the cross. He is the Lion of Judah but He is also the ***"Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!"*** The power of Christ is not that simply that He has the power of to create life and to destroy those who would do evil, the power of Christ is in His virtuous character – that He reflects a loving God who is willing to suffer and die for us. His victory secured our victory over sin and death. By His death He has destroyed death! By emptying Himself (setting aside much of His personal privilege and power to become flesh) He has shown us the heart of the Father. He demonstrated *not* the power of *might* but the power of love. And yet, true love cannot let evil go unpunished. True love cannot deny the truth. True love will hold every created being accountable. Hence, the greatest gift to the world – Jesus the Lamb - is also its judge - Jesus the Lion.

Christ's death sets the stage for the entire planet and all creation to be held accountable not just for its sin but for how it responds to Him and His Word. When we reflect on worship as the ultimate response to Who God Is and What He has done in Jesus Christ, it should also move us to ask the question, how am I living for Jesus? Paul gives us the answer, ***"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."*** (**1 Cor. 6:19-20**). Jesus is our Kinsman-Redeemer. We have been bought with a price, with the blood of Jesus. Therefore, let our worship not merely be in heart and spirit, but also in word and deed!