

AND THEY SANG A NEW
SONG, SAYING, "WORTHY
ARE YOU TO TAKE THE
SCROLL AND TO OPEN
ITS SEALS, FOR YOU WERE
SLAIN, AND BY YOUR BLOOD
YOU RANSOMED PEOPLE
FOR GOD FROM EVERY
TRIBE AND LANGUAGE AND
PEOPLE AND NATION.

REVELATION 5:9

THE SCROLL AND THE LAMB

THE STORY
OF HEAVEN

DATE

December 5 & 6

WEEK

1 of 3

OVERVIEW

Revelation 4-5

KEY VERSE

Revelation 5:9

SETTING THE STAGE

Revelation chapters 4-7 introduce us to heaven for the first time in the book. Up until this point, Jesus has been speaking to specific churches. If you have a red-letter edition of the Bible, you will notice that every word in chapters 2 and 3 are red, indicating the words of Jesus.

Then something changes in chapter 4 as we see not only that the red-letter words are gone, but John sees heaven.

REVELATION 4:1-2 *After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things."¹ Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne.*

The description John gives is like someone vigorously grasping at words trying to describe the indescribable. John had spent over three years with Jesus and was one of His closest friends, even being entrusted to take care of Jesus' mother Mary (John 19:27). John was with Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-13). But John had never seen heaven. John had never seen the majesty and glory of the One rightfully on His throne. And now, the door to heaven was standing open.

With thrones, crowns, flashes of lightning, and more, there was a scene of heavenly worship described by John in chapter 4. All gathered around the throne; they were worshipping the Creator of all creation, culminating in a song of praise. *Continued on page 86 >*

LESSON OUTLINE

1. The Scroll
2. The Lamb
3. The Song

THINGS TO KNOW

- Jesus is referred to as "the Lamb" at least twenty-eight times in the book of Revelation.¹
- Chapters 4 & 5 present heaven, God's dwelling place, as a real place.²

THE SCROLL AND THE LAMB

Setting the Stage, continued >

REVELATION 4:11 “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.”

This scene sets the stage for chapter 5, still gathered in the throne room. John continues to write down what he sees and experiences as he beholds the unveiling of heaven.

Introduction

Many of our concepts of heaven come from paintings, drawings, or perhaps even movies. Depending on the perspective, images include fluffy white clouds and chubby little angels with harps floating in the sky. Or there may be dark rolling clouds with lightning bolts flashing and strange looking creatures like that of a nightmare. Honestly, depending on which part of the book of Revelation you are reading, your perspective can change.

Today we are going to be in Chapter 5, which is a setting that has a little bit of both perspectives described above. There are some strange looking creatures described briefly, but there are also harps and golden lamps. However, the most significant part of the scene in this chapter is the presence of Jesus, our Redeemer, the Lamb of God.

1. THE SCROLL

REVELATION 5:1-2 *Then I saw in the right hand of Him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” (ESV)*

In his vision, John was in what we would refer to as “the throne room of heaven,” described in some detail in Revelation 4. The throne room is a place of worship and praise. God is rightfully on His throne, and all those present celebrate with song in His honor. John was looking from the other side of the door into heaven (Revelation 4:1).

With the words, “*Then I saw,*” his attention is drawn to the right hand of Him who is seated on the throne, God. Note there is significance in the words, numbers, symbols, and actions in all of Scripture, but perhaps to an even greater and more mysterious degree in the book of Revelation. The number 7, for instance, means perfection and completion. ³ The “right hand” is a symbol of God’s strength and justice. ⁴

¹ Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary, NT*; David C. Cook, Colorado Springs, CO, 2007, p. 1051.

² www.soniclight.com/revelation

³ www.biblestudy.org/bibleref/meaning-of-numbers-in-bible

⁴ www.bible.org/seriespage



There was this scroll *written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals*. Scrolls in ancient times rarely had writing on both sides because one side was usually rough and uneven. When both sides of a scroll were written on, it was an indication of a full and essential message.⁵ This was obviously an important message because it had writing on both sides as well as having seven seals. The scroll was not Scripture like a scroll of the prophet Isaiah or Jeremiah; it was a title deed that could only be opened by the appointed heir.⁶

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John is watching this scene in heaven, and then a mighty unnamed angel proclaims, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seal?” There were angels, elders, and heavenly creatures surrounding this throne, yet none could break the seal. There appeared to be none worthy, which is strange since they are in heaven. But no one was found worthy from the elders to the angels, to various creatures, not one. John was not only in disbelief but moved to tears.

REVELATION 5:4 *and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. (ESV)*

The word for weep is the same word used when Jesus was weeping over Jerusalem and when Peter was weeping after having denied knowing Jesus for the third time. This was a wailing of tears from John because no one could be found worthy to unseal this important document. The urgency of the moment had gotten to him. He realized that what was unveiling before his eyes was a glimpse of the things which were to come, and it appeared that no one was worthy to break the seals of the scroll. Or was there?

REVELATION 5:5 *And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that He can open the scroll and its seven seals.” (ESV)*

There was one found worthy—the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David. The titles themselves depict majesty and strength. The reference to the Lion of Judah goes all the way back to Genesis 49:8-10, where Jacob prophetically gave the scepter to Judah and made it the tribe of the kings.⁷

The Kings were strong, fierce and majestic like a lion. They were to be feared and respected as leaders. The picture is that of courage and victory. The Root of David is a messianic title from Isaiah 11:1,10 showing that a descendant of David would be the long-awaited Messiah.

There is only One who would be found worthy in all of heaven to open the seal. Jesus is the One worthy to take the scroll because of **who He is**, the rightful King from David’s loins; **what He is**, the Lion from Judah’s tribe with the power to destroy His enemies; and also because of **what He has done**—He has overcome.⁸ The anticipation of One so mighty, courageous, fierce, and respected was building. What would Jesus look like in heaven?

Perhaps John remembered the times they were on the boat in Galilee, or on the hillside with masses of people gathered around. John might have thought about the intimate gathering in the Upper Room the night before the crucifixion. John knew what Jesus looked like and could only imagine the majesty and glory in heaven. And then the Lion of Judah, the Root of David, entered.

⁵ www.raystedman.com/revelation5

⁶ Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary, NT*; David C. Cook, Colorado Springs, CO, 2007, p. 1050.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Revelation 1-11*; Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL; 1999; p. 167.

2. THE LAMB

It was not as John must have anticipated. Jesus did not enter as One looking majestic, courageous, victorious, or respected. Jesus entered as a lamb.

REVELATION 5:6 *And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. (ESV)*

There is a popular song by Mercy Me called “I Can Only Imagine,” but this is a sight that not even John could have imagined. He was not looking at a lion, but rather a lamb. The reality was setting in on what was taking place. The Lord Jesus could not be the Lion of judgment or the King of glory unless He was first “*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*” (John 1:29)⁹ The lamb is consistently connected with the Passover from as far back as the times of Moses. The word for lamb is describing one that would be brought in as a pet for the family. They would keep, feed, protect the innocent unblemished lamb for four days before the sacrifice of that innocent, pure lamb. Interestingly, Jesus is referred to as the Lamb 28 times in the book of Revelation and as a Lion only once.

However, this Lamb did not look pure and innocent or resemble any sort of family pet. This Lamb, though standing, looked as though it had been slain. Pause for a moment to reflect on what is taking place in the grandeur and majesty inside the throne room of heaven. The Lion of Judah, the Root of David, is a Lamb that had been slain, though standing.

John was there when Jesus was arrested in the garden in the dark, early hours of the morning He was betrayed. Jesus was arrested and tried illegally while being slapped, beaten, spit upon, and scourged publicly. Isaiah would prophesy the following about Jesus,

ISAIAH 53:7 *He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He did not open His mouth;
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,
So He did not open His mouth.*

In heaven before the eyes of John stood the Lamb that had been slain. His scars still apparent as a reminder of His suffering and sacrifice for the world.

In heaven before the eyes of John stood the Lamb that had been slain. His scars still apparent as a reminder of His suffering and sacrifice for the world. A reminder of the cost to heaven for the price of sin. But do not miss the fact the Lamb was standing. The Lamb was victorious. The Lamb conquered the grave. The Lamb of God was on His Throne. The Lamb of God was the Lion of Judah and the Root of David. The Lamb of God, though slain, was still standing.

The slain Lamb was standing before all heaven “*with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.*” Here is what Warren Wiersbe says about this verse,

Since seven is the number of perfection, we have here perfect power (seven horns), perfect wisdom (seven eyes), and perfect presence (seven Spirits in all the earth). The theologians would call these qualities omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence; and all three are attributes of God.¹⁰

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary, NT*; p. 1051.

The stark reality is that Jesus left the splendor, glory, and perfection of heaven to come to earth as a man (Philippians 2:5-8). He was fully divine and fully human as He dwelt among us. And for our salvation, Jesus became the Lamb of God, the final sacrifice for humankind. But now in heaven, there was still work to do.

REVELATION 5:7-8 *And He went and took the scroll from the right hand of Him who was seated on the throne. ⁸ And when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. (ESV)*

Jesus took the scroll from the right hand of His Father. Jesus was found worthy of the role of opening the scroll. Though we will not be studying what the scroll says in detail, it sets forth the judgment that takes place in chapters 6 and 8. However, at this moment, the scene is changing. John had been weeping, that has stopped. The worthy One has been introduced. It is as if when the scroll was placed in the hand of Jesus, there was a sigh of relief, confidence, humility, and praise.

Notice not a word was spoken, the scroll was merely released by God and taken by Jesus. It was time for the anticipated, but not known, action to take place. Matthew 24:36 says, “*But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.*” Those present fell down before the Lamb. They took a posture of humility before Jesus holding the scroll. They offered prayers, held harps, and incense burned in bowls. The mood was changing from weeping to worshipping.

3. THE SONG

REVELATION 5:9-14 *And they sang a new song, saying,*

*“Worthy are You to take the scroll and to open its seals,
for You were slain, and by Your blood You ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,
¹⁰ and You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth.”*

¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice,

*“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might
and honor and glory and blessing!”*

¹³ And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,

*“To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”*

¹⁴ And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped. (ESV)

Notice in verse 9 when it says this was a “new” song. This is not a song that had been written, sung, or experienced before. This song was brand-new. The time had come for that which had been long-awaited. The scroll was in the hand of the slain Lamb that was standing. The One who paid the price for the sin of the world. This new song made sure that there was recognition of the blood sacrifice for salvation.

Notice how it shows that Jesus gave His life for the world, *every tribe and language and people and nation*. There is no one on this earth regardless of language spoken, the color of skin, ancestry, or education that is not included in this verse.

This season of the year is a time we sing lots of Christmas songs, including “Joy to the World,” which reminds us that Jesus brought the joy of salvation to this entire world. One of the verses in that song says,

*He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The light of His righteousness
And wonders of His love*

Jesus showed the wonders of His love with truth and grace for the nations of this world.

Jesus showed the wonders of His love with truth and grace for the nations of this world. There is Joy in heaven because of what Jesus did and was about to do. There was an anticipation of all that will take place, ultimately leading to Christ ruling the world with truth and grace.

The waves of praise do not end with the elders. As if caught up in rapturous joy, two more groups joined in, angels and every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and in the sea. ¹¹ We get the sense that John is captured in the moment, taking it all in, and then as he looked around, he first heard the voice of many angels. It was as if they were in one voice (singular), but the numbers were beyond comprehension.

Myriads are typically known to be ten thousand, so this is a choir of angels into the tens if not hundreds of thousands, perhaps even more in one unified voice saying, not singing:

REVELATION 5:12 *saying with a loud voice,*

*“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might
and honor and glory and blessing!”*

These are words of praise and adoration that Jesus never received on earth. Jesus was born in a manger in the small town of Bethlehem because there was not enough room at an inn. He was raised in anonymity for 30 years except for one moment when He was twelve on the steps of the Temple in Jerusalem. Jesus was ridiculed by the Pharisees and Sadducees and condemned by the political leaders of the day. He was betrayed for 30 pieces of silver by one of His disciples. One of His closest disciples betrayed Him by denial three times. Another disciple did not believe it was Him until He allowed the disciple to touch the scars in His hand and side after His resurrection.

Jesus was crucified between two common thieves at the place of the skull on the outskirts of Jerusalem for all to see His nakedness, suffering, and last breath. Jesus had never received this kind of praise while on earth. But now in heaven, it was different. In heaven, it was at it should have been and will now always be.

In heaven, the myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands of angels were saying in one unified voice,

¹¹ Chuck Swindoll, *Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary, Revelation*; Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, IL; 2014, p. 106.

*“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might
and honor and glory and blessing!” (ESV)*

The Lamb was slain so we could be redeemed. As the old hymn says, “Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.” They were proclaiming that the Lamb that had been slain was worthy. After all the ridicule, persecution, beating, spitting, scourging, bleeding, humiliation, excruciating pain on the cross, and even death; the Lamb is worthy.

The Lamb is worthy to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing! Do not miss the exclamation point! It is as if these thousands upon thousands of angels had to stop themselves because they could have gone on and on. They did not use a period that emphasized the truth, rather emphatically, they used an exclamation point! Joy to the World the Lord has come in the form of a Lamb, a slain Lamb that was standing.

The closing verses of this chapter expand the praise beyond the throne room of heaven.

REVELATION 5:13-14 *And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,
“To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”
¹⁴ And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped. (ESV)*

The entire universe began praising God the Father sitting on His throne and next to Him, the Lamb of God, His Son. This is reminiscent of the very last verse in Psalms, Psalm 150:6, “*Let everything that has breath, Praise the Lord!*”

The scene closes with worship and praise that would ultimately never end. May we join along and say with joy in our hearts to Him, “be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” Amen.

HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

We often say things in church like “God is on His throne,” which is to say that God is in control. Those words give us comfort in times that seem so far beyond our control. There is an assurance that the One who spoke the world into existence is the One who has been and will forever be on His throne surrounded by those who worship Him. Revelation is ultimately a book of worship. This time of year, when we are beginning to see the signs of Christmas in neighborhoods, homes, and shopping centers, what better time to worship?

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HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

We are to worship the One we celebrate this time of year, the baby that was born in Bethlehem. The Baby who grew up as the son of a carpenter, but had the birthright of heaven. Jesus grew up to minister for a little over three years, teaching, serving, healing, performing miracles all the while knowing that He would be led to slaughter like a lamb.

We are to worship the One who gave His life as the final sacrifice for the sins of the world. We are to worship the One who was buried in the tomb. We are to worship the One who rose from the grave. We are to worship the One who is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven. We are to worship the One who is the Lamb that was slain but now stands victoriously in heaven. The Lamb of God worthy of our worship and praise. May the season of Christmas be the season of worship. O come let us adore Him, the Lamb of God standing and worthy of our worship.