The Book of Revelation

Zanesville, OH | Wednesday/Sunday Bible Study

**Chapter 5**

* **5:1-14– Worship of The Lamb; The Book**
* **Verse 1**– As the vision of the heavenly court continues, John observes a book (scroll) in the right hand of the One sitting on the throne. This book is akin to the one spoken of in Ezek. 2:9-10. The book is said to have writings on the inside and the back indicating the fullness of God’s sovereign will.
* The nature of the book is not expounded much upon but in light of chapters 1-3 and what will unfold in chapters 6-22, it is best understood as containing the content pertaining to God’s divine will for judgment and redemption.
* That it is sealed with seven seals indicates the *“absolute inviolability of the scroll”* (Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*). The mention of a book or scroll with seals brings to mind Isa. 29:11 but especially Dan. 8:26; 12:4-9. It is likely that the content Daniel sealed is the same here mentioned.
* **Verse 2**– A strong angel (cf. 10:1-2; 18:21) asks the question, *“Who is worthy…”* indicating the high level of importance of the book and the one able to open it and break the seals. The concern *“…is not with naked power but with worthiness”* (Morris, *Apocalyptic*). The call of the angel pertains to one who is able to take the book and execute God’s will to bring history to its foreordained consummation.
* **Verse 3**– The call or “challenge” has gone forth throughout all creation but the response is silence. No one is found worthy to open the book and to break its seals (moral incompetence). *“This demonstrates the inability of any among God’s creatures to execute God’s plan of redemption and judgment”* (Beale, *The Book of Revelation*).
* **Verse 4**– John begins to weep (bitterness, disappointment) because no one has answered the call and no one is found worthy. John understands the importance of opening the book and breaking the seals. If it is not done, God’s plan for redemption and judgment are postponed indefinitely.
* **Verse 5**– An elder interrupts John’s weeping to give him the news that there has been found One worthy. The worthy One is described as the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:9-10) and the Root of David (Isa. 11:1, 10; Jer.23:5-6; Rom. 15:2; Rev. 22:16). The Lion of Judah is a well-known Messianic passage speaking of a future king whose scepter shall never depart the throne.
* The Root of David is a clear allusion to Isa. 11:1, 10 speaking of the Davidic king who will rule forever and ever and renew a relationship between God and man. He is to judge with righteousness and bring peace sowing together the house of Israel with the house of Judah (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8-9).
* **Verse 6**– John sees at the center of it all *“a Lamb standing as if slain.”* Given the elders’ words in v. 5, one might expect John to see a Lion but instead he sees a Lamb. How are these depictions reconciled? *“The Lion is the Lamb: the ultimate power of God (“Lion”) is manifest on the Cross (“Lamb”)”* (Harrington, *The Apocalypse of St. John*).
* The victory then hailed by the elder in v. 5 is the Lamb’s sacrifice (slain) on the cross. Thus, He is worthy to take the book and break its seals. It is here we arrive at the obvious conclusion that this chapter and the message centers around the victorious Christ. In Johannine writings, Jesus is constantly referred to as the Lamb (Jn. 1:29; 36; Rev. 6:1, 7, 16; 7:9-10; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1, 4; 15:3; 17:14; 21:9; 22:1).
* The Lamb connotation is without a doubt rooted in Isa. 53:7 which speaks of the suffering servant who would reconcile man back to God. It may go back even further than that tying in the Passover Lamb imagery from Exodus 12 (cf. 1 Cor. 5:7). This Lamb has achieved victory through His very death and resurrection (cf. 1:5-6).
* The great paradox of an innocent, suffering Messiah being victorious is best understood in light of the spiritual vs. the carnal. Christ was physically defeated but He was spiritually victorious. He defeated the devil and his power by maintaining His fealty to the Father (1 Pet. 2:23). The saints are encouraged thus to do the same.
* The Lamb is pictured as having seven horns and seven eyes. This is a way of saying He is full of strength and wisdom unlike any other. This strength and wisdom is manifested time and time again throughout the book (6:15-17; 17:12-14). The idea of strength being portrayed by horns go back to earlier writings (Deut. 33:17; Dan. 7:7, 20; 8:3, 5).
* The seven eyes being indicative of all knowledge and wisdom (2 Chron. 16:9; Zech. 4:10) are further described as the seven Spirits of God (1:4; 4:5) who are sent out into all the earth. This is likely a way of saying the Holy Spirit conveys and executes God’s plan through Christ in all the earth (Matt. 3:11; Jn. 16:5-15; Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-4, 14-21, 38; 10:44-47).
* **Verse 7**– Because the Lamb was slain and has conquered, He is worthy to take the book out of the right hand of the One sitting on the throne (cf. Dan. 7:13-14). This is the first time in this scene of the heavenly court someone directly interacts with God on the throne. This indicates Jesus’ connection to Him but also the nature of His power and sovereignty.
* **Verse 8**– *“With the handing of the scroll to the Lamb we enter into one of the greatest scenes of universal adoration anywhere recorded”* (Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*). The reason the Lamb is able to take the book is because of His sacrifice and He is therefore lauded and exalted for such by the four living creatures and the elders.
* The proper response to Jesus’ sacrifice and worthiness is to fall prostrate before Him. The elders each have a harp (cf. Psa. 33:2; 43:4; 150:3) and golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints (Psa. 141:2). These prayers are later mentioned in 6:9-11 and 8:3-4.
* **Verses 9-10**– The elders now praise Jesus for His redemptive work by singing a *“new song.”* The idea of a new song is rooted in the Psalms (Psa. 33:3; 40:23; 96:1; 98:1) and the meaning is that *“every new act of mercy calls for a new song of gratitude and praise”* (cf. Isa. 42:5-17) (Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*).
* The deified Lamb is connected to God the Father as He is called worthy (4:11). The Lamb is worthy to take the book, open it and break its seals for 3 reasons: (1) He was slain (Mk. 10:45), (2) Purchased souls for God via blood (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 6:20) and (3) People made kingdom and priests (1:6).
* The Lamb is praised as worthy precisely because of the act of redemption He has executed in accordance with the plan of God (1 Pet. 1:18-19). The shedding of His blood has made it possible that all men (no partiality; Acts 10:34-35; Rom. 2:11; Gal. 2:6; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:11) can be saved and reconciled with the One sitting on the throne.
* The promise made to the nation of Israel at Sinai (Ex. 19:6) finds its ultimate fulfillment in the church, the true Israel (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; 9:23-26) as they are now made a kingdom and priests to God (Jn. 18:36). The reign promised to them is akin to the promise Christ made to the overcomers in Thyatira (2:26-27).
* **Verses 11-12**– John now sees what can only be described as a scene of absolute magnificence. For the first time in the heavenly court, angels beyond that of the living creatures and the elders appear and their presence comes with a grand purpose. John says there are myriads and myriads and thousands and thousands of these heavenly host present (cf. Dan. 7:10).
* The angels appear with the sole purpose of proclaiming the worthiness of the Lamb to receive exalted attributes tied to deity (1 Chron. 29:10-19). The understanding here is that the Lamb possesses these qualities and He is fully deserving of receiving them because He was slain (Matt. 28:18; Jn. 1:14; 2 Cor. 8:9; Eph. 3:8; Phil. 2:9-11).
* **Verse 13**– The scene of the heavenly court/Theophany reaches its climax with everything in creation (cf. Psa. 148) giving praise justly due to the One on the throne and the Lamb (cf. Phil. 2:9-11). Chapter 4 spoke of the Father’s attributes and work in creation while chapter 5 deals with the Lamb’s sacrificial role in salvation. Both are endlessly deserving of exaltation and veneration for their respective roles and deeds.
* The climax also serves to demonstrate Christ’s exalted position as Lord and King just as the One sitting on the throne. They are in the same divine position and worthy of glory and honor (Jude 1:25). Throughout the remainder of the book both the Lamb and the One on the throne are connected in terms of judgment and redemption.
* **Verse 14**– The four living creatures respond with an *“Amen”* to all that has been said to Father and the Son. What more can they say but to agree with the grandeur of honor showered upon them? The elders all fall down and worship as they should and as we all should. These 2 chapters help us to understand God’s purpose for all mankind and thus prepares us for the rest of the book and its message.