

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

WEEK 6: CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 5

- Just by way of review...where we were, are, and where we are headed.
- **Chapter 1:19a** “Therefore, write the things which you *have seen...*” (the past)
- **Chapter 1:19b** “...and the things *which are...*” (the present)
- **Chapter 1:19c** “...and the things which *will take place after these things.*” (the future)
- **Chapter 4** starts *and the things which will take place after these things.*
- In fact, from chapter 4 – 22 we have the entire unfolding of the final events of this age.
- **Chapters 4-5:** A Prologue to the final section.
 - Chapters 4 and 5 are the introduction and background of the tremendous sweep of prophetic events predicted in the rest of the book. If chapter 4 and succeeding chapters relate to the future, they provide an important clue concerning the interpretation of the vision and the prophetic events which unfold in those chapters. (Walvoord)
- **Chapters 6-19:** The Tribulation and Great Tribulation
 - Daniel’s 70th week
 - **Daniel 9:24-27**
 - The time of Jacobs distress (trouble)
 - **Jeremiah 30:7** “Alas! for that day is great, there is none like it; and it is the time of Jacob’s distress, but he will be saved from it.”
 - The Day of the Lord (not a *day* but a prolonged period that beings after the rapture)
 - **Zephaniah 1:15-16** “A day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, {16} a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and the high corner towers.”
- **Chapter 20:** The Millennium Kingdom (1000-year reign of Christ on the physical earth)
- **Chapters 21-22:** The Eternal State (New Heavens and Earth)
- There is no break in continuity between chapter 4 and 5. John is still in the throne room, the same place that Jesus called him up in **4:1**.
- This is really the last chapter of Revelation before the judgements start and the true power of God is displayed for the whole world to witness.

- In Chapter 4, our focus was on the throne of God. John mentioned the throne some 7 times.
- While the throne is still in view in **chapter 5**, the main focus now shifts to the book with 7 seals and the Lamb of God.
- The word *book* is used 8 times in these 14 verses.
- As Walvoord states, “Chapter 5 of the book of Revelation continues the vision of the throne of heaven given in the preceding chapter. John is now introduced to an item of central importance, namely, a book which contains the prophecy of impending events to be unfolded in the book of Revelation.”

CHAPTER 5:1-4 ~ THE BOOK

Revelation 5:1-4 “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. {2} And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the **book** and to break its seals?" {3} And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the **book** or to look into it. {4} Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the **book** or to look into it...”

- This book, or scroll, has been seen by John and catches his eye because it is **in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne**.
- Often times in the Bible, human forms, emotions, or actions are given to us to represent God in terms that we are able to understand. This is called anthropomorphism. (**Anthropos**: man and **Morphe**: shape or form)
- You can say that they are a *bridge* between the divine and the finite creature.
- Since God is Spirit and does not have a body, He is not *sitting on a throne* nor does He have a *right hand* to hold onto a scroll.
- **What does this mean?**
- John uses human terms to communicate to his readers some of the attributes of God.
 - The “right hand” symbolizes sovereignty, power, and God’s execution of His will. God is the protector and source of all that is going to happen. He has the scroll.
 - Saying that God “sat on the throne” symbolizes God’s universal authority and majesty. He is the ultimate judge and king of the earth. He is in complete control.
- This scroll was written on both the *inside and on the back*.
 - Some think this to be a normal way of writing on a scroll. Since you would not want to completely unfurl a scroll to find out if it had what you wanted, the outside contained a summary of what was actually on the inside.

- The other thought is from Walvoord, “The importance and comprehensive character of the revelation contained is indicated by the fact that the book is written on both sides of the parchment. Further, the document is made impressive by seven seals, apparently fixed on the edges of the scroll in such a way that the seals must be successively broken if the scroll is to be unrolled and read.”
- Either way, John saw and recorded that this scroll had a lot of writing. It was so important that, as Walvoord said, it had 7 seals.
- The 7 seals were, as Walvoord also said, *in such a way that the seals must be successively broken*.
 - This means that not all the seals were on the outside at once. Each one had to be broken, then the scroll was rolled out some, then the next seal was broken, and the process continued.
 - This is realized in **chapter 6** when each seal is broken and something else happens.
- **Verse 2**, John says that he saw a *strong angel* and this angel had a *loud voice*. This proclamation from this angel went out to the entire creation (**verse 3...heaven, on the earth, under the earth**).
- His question was simple...*who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?*
- Apparently, after this proclamation, there were no immediate takers. There was no one who was found worthy to open the book and break the seals.
- In **verse 4**, this causes John to *weep greatly*.
- “It is evident that the contents of the book are impressive in character and require the power of God for their revelation as well as for the execution of their program.” (Walvoord)
- Interestingly, perhaps part of John’s weeping was that he thought that what he was told (*what would take place after these things*) was not going to happen. He may have thought that the plans were thwarted and nothing more was going to happen.
- “He wept at the prospect of an indefinite postponement of God’s final and decisive action. The universe itself was morally incapable of effecting its own destiny”¹
- **What are the contents or purpose of the scroll?**
- While there are some differing opinions, “in this case it almost certainly is a deed—the title deed to the earth.”²
- As we’ll read in **verse 7**, the Lamb (Jesus) is going to take the scroll from God the Father. It is only after this transaction that the judgments are going to be enacted against the earth.
- *Through His perfect judgment upon the earth, Christ is going to claim the earth as His own.*
- “Thus, the title deed contains a plan for the future that gives the successive steps that lead to the inauguration of the world kingdom of Christ when He comes to rule and reign with all authority on the

¹ Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 131.

² *The MacArthur Study Bible*, Re 5:1.

earth. It is a book whose contents are enacted, not read...resulting in the title deed of the earth being given to Christ as the rightful owner and ruler of it.”³

CHAPTER 5:5-7 ~ THE LAMB IS WORTHY

Revelation 5:5-7 “...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." {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. {7} And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.”

- In Revelation 5, the scene shifts from God the Father (4:2 ~ the one who sits on the throne) and the God the Holy Spirit (4:5 ~ there were 7 lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God) to God the Son. Christ dominates this chapter and which shows that heaven is thoroughly Christ-focused in its worship. This means that the substance and content of true worship is the birth, the life, the ministry, the perfection, the teaching, the suffering, the death, the resurrection, the ascension, and the return of Jesus Christ.”⁴
- “The worship of God for his role in creation gives way to the worship of the Lamb for his work of redemption.”⁵
- One of the elders tells John to *stop weeping*. He says, *behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah...*
 - **Genesis 49:8-10** “Judah, your brothers shall praise you; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father's sons shall bow down to you. {9} "Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him up? {10} "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.”
 - Christ is the everlasting King, the Lion from the tribe of Judah, to rule (Revelation 19:11-19)
- *...the Root of David...*
 - **Isaiah 11:1** “Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.”
 - This title, the Root of David, is given to Jesus since He is the Son of David...He is the greater David who will ultimately fulfill the promises of the Davidic covenant when He rules on David’s throne during the Millennial Kingdom.
 - This Lion from Judah, this Root of David is worthy because *He has overcome...*

³ <https://www.mbcmi.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Revelation-5.pdf>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Mounce, 128–129.

- “His victory is such that He has the right not only to take the book but to open it and loose the seven seals thereof. The Scriptures seem to distinguish between opening the book (which would involve beginning the process of unrolling the scroll) and the complete authority to break all the seven seals successively. It implies that Christ is completely worthy and has full authority and sovereignty in respect to the contents of the seven-sealed book.” (Walvoord)
- Stop and think about what John thought he was going to see...a Lion, maybe David or another conqueror?
- In **verse 7**, John sees *a Lamb standing, as if slain...*
- What a sight! What did this Lamb overcome so that He was worthy to open the scrolls? The Lamb has been slain, this is Christ’s death, His substitutionary work on the cross. But the Lamb is also alive, this points to Christ’s resurrection from the dead.
- “...the lion character refers to His second coming, since the lion speaks of His majesty. As lion He is sovereign; as lion He is Judge. The lion speaks of the government of God. The lamb character refers to His first coming, for the lamb speaks of His meekness. As lamb He is Saviour; as lamb He is judged. The lamb speaks of the grace of God. As far as the book of Revelation is concerned, however, Christ is referred to as the Lion only once, here in 5:5, in contrast to the many times He is identified as the Lamb. The purpose of the use of the term “lamb” seems to be to identify the glorified Christ of Revelation with Christ the Lamb of sacrifice in His first coming.” (Walvoord)
- John also sees the Lamb *having 7 horns and 7 eyes...* John says *which are the 7 Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.*
 - The 7 horns seem to speak of Jesus’ power and omnipotence as King (similar to Daniel 7:24) and the 7 Spirits of God are another reference to the sevenfold Spirit of God...The Holy Spirit Who was sent by Christ into the world (John 16:7).
- **Verse 7** is the “hinge” in Revelation. Jesus takes the scroll, showing that He is the One who is worthy.
- “In the act of receiving the book from God the Father, it is made evident that judgment and power over the earth are committed to Christ the Son of God.” (Walvoord)
 - The parallel passage to the ultimate triumph of Christ is in **Daniel 7:13-14** “I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. {14} And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.”
 - “In that future day complete authority over the world will be realized by Christ, an authority which He will exercise both in the judgments which precede His second coming and in His reign for one

thousand years which will follow His second advent. Once again in the book of Revelation the focus is upon Christ, the central character of the book and the One whose glory is supremely revealed in the unfolding pages of its prophecies.” (Walvoord)

CHAPTER 5:8-10 ~ THE LAMB IS WORSHIPPED

Revelation 5:8-10 “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. {9} 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. {10} You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.’”

- “As the rest of the chapter reveals, this is grounds for Christ-centered worship. The worthy One has been found and He will one day unleash the events which will result in all of God’s promises being fulfilled. Thus, heaven is consumed in its worship of the Lion and the Lamb. By way of implication, Christ is the supreme and singular focus of genuine worship. Biblical worship is not primarily about style; rather, it is about substance. It’s not primarily about our efforts, creativity, or talent...it’s not about how we feel or look...it’s about the person and work of Christ.”⁶
- “In connection with their worship of the Lamb, it is mentioned that the creatures and the elders have harps which are symbols and instruments of divine worship, and that they possess and pour out golden vials full of odors which are declared to be the prayers of the saints.”
- **The name Lamb for Jesus is full of meaning and symbolism.**
 - “There is much OT imagery here as lambs were the primary animal used for sacrifices. The imagery here derives from the Passover when Jewish families were required to keep the sacrificial lamb as a household pet for four days before sacrificing it as a means of covering their sin. Every lamb sacrificed under the Old Covenant pointed toward Christ. Christ is referred to as a lamb only once in the OT (Isaiah 53:7). He is referred to as a lamb four times in the NT outside of Revelation (John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32; 1Pet 1:19). In Revelation, He appears as the Lamb 31 times. Heavenly worship is fueled by a deep awareness of Christ’s sacrifice.”⁷
- “The same Lamb of God who suffered the abuse of the soldiers and the scoffing of the crowd as well as the agony on the cross is here being given His rightful worship.” (Walvoord)
- “The golden vials or bowls filled with sacred perfume or incense represent the prayers of the saints according to the text. Here in heaven the importance of prayer in the earthly scene is inferred. The role of

⁶ <https://www.mbcmi.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Revelation-5.pdf>

⁷ Ibid.

the elders seems to be one of sympathetic presentation, not that of a mediator of earthly prayers. The symbolism of bowls of incense representing the prayers of the saints is reflected in Psalm 141:2 where David cried to the Lord, “Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.” (Walvoord)

- “Specifically, these prayers represent all that the redeemed have ever prayed concerning ultimate and final redemption.”⁸
- “The reference to **the prayers of the saints** at this point seems to be their prayers for the coming of the Kingdom. “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” is an age-long prayer of the church which is now about to be answered.”⁹
- “Incense perennially represented, among other things, the prayers of the people of God. Just as incense is a sweet savor in human nostrils, so the supplications of God’s people have always been sweet to the God of all creation. The bowls full of the incense, which are the prayers of the saints, is an indication that the Lamb is the answer to the most fervent heartfelt prayers of the people of God.”¹⁰
- In the context here, I think that it is best to see these prayers that are in the bowls the prayers for redemption. They are from all believers of all time for Christ to return and take His rightful place on earth.
- I believe that is connected with **verses 9-10** and the instant worship that they all give to the Lamb.
- In these 2 verses, there are 4 reasons that they praise the Lamb and why He is worthy to take the book:
 - **He was slain:**
 - Jesus was the payment for our sins. It was by His substitutionary death on the cross that all those who call upon Him will no longer face the wrath of God.
 - **By His death, He purchased sinful men for God:**
 - It was by His death that Christ not only took our penalty for sin, but He also set us free from the dominion of darkness.
 - I want you to notice something here...your salvation was not for you, it was **for God**. While Jesus did die to free us, it was **for God**.
 - Jesus did not save us so that we could then live for ourselves, it was **for God**.
 - When John says, *with Your blood*, John is not talking about some sort of magic or mystical power in the actual, liquid blood of Jesus.
 - When the Bible speaks of the blood of Christ, it is a metaphor for His death.

⁸ *The MacArthur Study Bible*, Re 5:8.

⁹ Ladd, *Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 89.

¹⁰ Patterson, *Revelation*, vol. 39, NAC (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2012), 168.

- **Hebrews 9:22** “And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”
- How efficient was Christ’s death? John doesn’t say they worshipped Jesus by saying that His death made salvation an option for people, but that Jesus *purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.*
- There is not a single place on earth that is outside of the reaching power of Christ’s atoning work on the cross.
- This is not saying that every person will be saved, but that by Christ’s death, He saved people from all those areas.
- In other words, Christ’s death actually saved some, ***without distinction***, from every nation on earth. He actually redeemed men through His death.
- **He made redeemed mankind to be a kingdom and priests:**
 - “The peculiar privileges of the church are clearly indicated. The church is a priesthood rather than having a priesthood, and is a royal family rather than merely being ruled by a king. The members will not be so much subjects of the kingdom as they will be reigning with Christ on the earth.” (Walvoord)
 - While we are saved, having our sins forgiven, and we will be in heaven with God for all of eternity...the blessings are not just that...
- **The redeemed will reign upon the earth:**
 - “Here again is intimated the purpose of God to consummate and fulfill the prophecies of an earthly kingdom in which Christ will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. The phrase “on the earth” is significant as referring to the earthly millennial reign of Christ in which the church will participate. The Greek preposition *epi* is properly translated “on” or “upon.” In this glorious earthly scene to follow the dark hour of the tribulation, the church will share the glory of Christ as joint heirs with Christ and sharers of His sovereign rule.” (Walvoord)
 - **Revelation 20:6** “Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.”
 - **1 Corinthians 6:2-3** “Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? {3} Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life?”

CHAPTER 5:11-14 ~ ALL CREATION WORSHIPS THE LAMB

Revelation 5:11-14 “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, {12} saying 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.” {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.” {14} And the four living creatures kept saying, “Amen.” And the elders fell down and worshiped.”

- Notice the worship, again, is centered on the work of Jesus in the redemption of His people.
- The heavenly chorus was filled with 1000’s upon 1000’s of voices...then the things created on earth and under the earth joined in as well.
- Essentially, it was the entire universe which brought their praises to the Lamb of God.
- **Can we say that the worship of Jesus is centered on the gospel?**
- Our worship should flow from our grateful hearts to our Savior...the Lamb of God.
- How do we view our worship of the Lord?
- John the Baptist recognized Jesus like this, he said in **John 1:29** ““The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’”
- It is our proper recognition of who Jesus is, what Jesus did, and what He will do that fuels and motivates our worship through song and our lives.
- Worthy! The Lamb! Eternal! Ruler! All the reasons (v. 13) they worshipped Jesus.

Practical Application for Our Own Hearts

- Do you know your Lord and Savior this way?
- When you gather with God’s people, are you expectant to worship the Lamb like this?
- Where are your thoughts and your focus when singing to the Lord?
- **Hebrews 13:15** “Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.”
- **Colossians 3:16** “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”
- Do you see the common focus...it is the Lamb of God...Jesus Christ that fuels our thankfulness and praise!