

Introduction

Don't rush past chapter 5 in a hurry to get to the seven seals of judgment in the next chapter. This heavenly "prelude" is very important for placing not just the entire book of Revelation into the proper context, but the purpose and ministry of Christ Himself. What solidifies together in heaven in many ways is a foreshadowing of things occurring on earth. In fact, much of what goes on here is a pattern of how we're to live and worship and behave in the here and now of our present life and not just an isolated picture of some future, heavenly event.

Read verses 1-5

¹I 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. ²And 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.

⁴Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; ⁵and 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."

Q: Why might "book" not be the most correct word to use here?

A: The Greek word literally refers to a scroll, the ancient equivalent of what we today call a "book".

Q: How might this scroll appear to readers of John's time? What would they probably immediately see it as?

A: It would be seen as both a title deed – in this case Christ's title deed to creation – and as a Roman will which was commonly sealed with seven seals.

Point: As confirmed in v.9, this scroll gives Christ the right to claim creation by virtue of His sacrifice.

Q: At the time of John's writing, who was allowed to open a will?

A: Only the heir could open the will.

in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

Hebrews 1:2

Q: What is significant about the fact that the scroll is full of writing on both sides?

A: There are probably several things, but chief among them would be that nothing more can be added to it. All it contains is whole and complete.

Q: How does the picture of what's going on here relate to the Hebrew system of owning land?

A: If a man became poor and had to sell himself or his land, he could be redeemed by a kinsman-redeemer. (Lev. 25:23-25) The story of Ruth is such an example as well as Jeremiah's acquisition. (Jer. 32:6-15) The redeemer had to be a near relative willing and able to purchase the property and set the kinsman free.

Point: All of creation has been under bondage to sin, Satan, and death. Christ our Kinsman-Redeemer is going to set creation free.

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Q: What is the greater significance behind the fact that an exhaustive search was conducted in both heaven and earth for someone “able to open the book or to look into it”?

A: It’s a very clear statement from God that no one except Christ alone can redeem. No one else in heaven, no one else on earth, no one in the underworld of death was worthy to take the book. There is no redemption except through Christ.

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father **but through Me.**

John 14:6

Q: Of all the titles that could be used of Christ, why was it pointed out to John, “Behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David”?

A: It’s a kind of summary of the fulfillment of all the Old Testament promises of the Messiah as the “Lion” going back to Gen. 49:8-10 and His royalty in the family of David. The “Root of David” speaks of His deity, the One through whom David came. (Is. 11:1, 10)

Q: But what is the even greater qualification of Christ to open the scroll than His lineage to Judah and David?

A: Christ is worthy to open the scroll because He “has overcome” – that is, He has prevailed, conquered, won the victory.

“These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.”

Revelation 17:14

Application: The “book” is actually both a **title deed** and a **will**.

- a. Only Christ **the Heir** can open the will.
 - b. Only Christ **the Redeemer** can reclaim title.
 - c. Only Christ **the Messiah** is worthy.
- Based on these verses, how would you respond to someone who says, “There are many paths to God” or “All religions ultimately worship the same God”?
 - Later on we’ll see both servants of God formally sealed and followers of Antichrist formally sealed. But in reality, how are both types of people already “sealed” even before that happens? [Hint: Those who have already accepted Christ are already “sealed” for redemption, those who have not already “sealed” for judgment.]

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⁶And 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. ⁷And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. ⁸When 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. ⁹And 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.

¹⁰You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”

Read verses 6-10

Q: Re-reading the entire text from the beginning of the chapter very carefully, why might it be surprising that John saw “a Lamb”?

A: Note that in v.5 the elder pointed out to John the coming of “*the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah*”. John was looking for “*the Lion*” but instead saw “*a Lamb*”.

Q: How might this reflect the situation on earth where the Messiah was concerned?

A: By Jesus’ time the Jews had determined from Scripture that there were two distinct pictures of the Messiah. One was called “The Suffering Servant” as symbolized by the life and character of Joseph, the other called “The Conquering King” as symbolized by the life and character of David. However, they did not fully realize this was speaking of one Messiah but two separate comings. When Jesus first arrived as “The Suffering Servant” – what is pictured in Revelation as “*a Lamb standing, as if slain*” – He was largely rejected because the people wanted instead to immediately experience “The Conquering King”, what is pictured in Revelation as “*the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah*”. The “Lamb” has to come before the “Lion”. The Jews overlooked the Lamb instead wanting to go directly to the Lion—that is, they wanted to skip past the First Coming and the cross to go directly to the Second Coming and the Millennial Reign.

Q: What is the greater spiritual meaning of Christ’s dual coming as both the Lion and the Lamb?

A: Where Christ is concerned we cannot separate the suffering and glory or the crown and the cross.

seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.

1 Peter 1:11

Observation: Christ is referred to as “*the Lamb*” at least 30 times in Revelation. This is a very significant and recurring reference which we need to fully understand if we’re to interpret Revelation correctly. In fact, the whole Bible could be summarized by tracing the theme of “*the lamb*”.

- Isaac asked, “Where is the lamb?” (Gen. 22:7)
- John the Baptist answered, “Behold the Lamb of God!” (John 1:29)
- Now the apostle John writes, “Worthy is the Lamb!”

There are many references to this theme, two of the strongest being the role of the lamb in the Passover (Ex. 12) and the description of the Messiah as the Lamb in Isaiah 53.

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Q: What does it mean to be “slain”?

A: In English we might think of “slain” as a generic term referring to being killed by any number of ways. But a more literal translation would be “cut in the throat for a sacrifice”.

Point: *Christ was not merely killed; He was offered as a sacrifice. His death and resurrection are proof that He is worthy to be the heir of creation, worthy to unseal the scroll.*

Q: How might the heavenly scene of worship reflect what is already happening in earthly worship?

A: The elders (representing the glorified church) sing Christ’s praises and magnify His death for the redemption of the lost creation. Heaven sings about the cross just as we already do here on earth in the course of our worship of Christ.

Q: How do we know that Christ is truly and literally coming back to earth?

A: In v.10 it states not merely that “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God”, but that “they will reign upon the earth”.

Point: *Christ will one day reign over a literal kingdom on earth.*

Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Revelation 20:4

Application: *The **Lamb** has to come before the **Lion***

- a. *Where Christ is concerned we cannot separate His suffering from His **glory** or the crown from the **cross***
- b. *The Lamb had to be **sacrificed***
- c. *Heaven celebrates the **cross** as much as the church on earth.*
- *In order to experience the “Lion”, how and why must we first experience the “Lamb”?*
- *If even heavenly worship centers on the work of the cross, how should we pattern our earthly worship?*
- *How is this another confirmation that salvation comes through Christ alone? [Hint: Only Christ was “slain” – that is, sacrificed.]*

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¹¹Then 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.”

¹³And 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.”

¹⁴And the four living creatures kept saying, “Amen.” And the elders fell down and worshiped.

Read verses 11-14

Q: How does this heavenly doxology provide a contrast to Christ's earthly life?

- His enemies said He was worthy of death (Jn. 19:7); the angels say He is worthy of praise.
- Men accused Him of working by the power of Satan (Mt. 12:24); the angels say He is worthy of power.
- Christ became poor for our sakes (2 Co. 13:4); the angels say He deserves all the riches.
- Although “*the preaching of the cross is foolishness*” to sinful man (1 Co. 1:18), it's wisdom to the angels.
- On earth Jesus was “*crucified in weakness*” (2 Co. 13:4); in heaven He is lauded for His power.
- Dishonored on earth, Christ is honored in glory.
- Made a curse on the cross, Christ today is both the recipient and bestower of blessing.
- Others?

Point: *This heavenly scene is a testimony to how wrong things can be from a strictly earthly point of view. How God sees and uses things is far different from the world's.*

Q: What might be significant that all of creation joined to honor Christ?

A: All creation anticipates the redemption that will come when Christ finally overcomes the enemy and establishes His kingdom.

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.

Philippians 2:10-11

and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

Colossians 1:20

Q: What is the truth about people who state, “I worship God but not Jesus Christ”?

A: To ignore Christ is actually to insult and ignore God. In heaven, every angel and saint will honor the Father and the Son will praise them.

so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

John 5:23

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Application: *The contrast of two views:*

The View from Earth

Worthy of **death**

Accused of working by the power
of **Satan**

Became **poor** for our sake

The cross "**foolishness**" to man

Crucified in **weakness** on earth

Made a **curse** on the cross

The View from Heaven

Worthy of **praise**

Worthy of **power**

Worthy of all **riches**

The cross "**wisdom**" to angels

Lauded for **power** in glory

Source of **blessing** in heaven

Overall Application

- It is important to *To punish the nations for their sins, especially for the way they have treated Israel, and*
- *To purge Israel and prepare a believing remnant to receive Christ when He comes in glory.*

keep in mind the overall dual purpose of the Tribulation:

*Those whom the book of Revelation repeatedly refer to as those who "dwell on the earth" are completely ignorant of this glorious scene in heaven. As in the days of Noah and Lot, they go their way eating and drinking and ignoring God's warnings. The Lamb will begin to open the book and judgment will fall. How important it is to be saved **now** while there is still the opportunity.*

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