

Revelation: Opening the Scroll

Revelation 5

In the context of the throne room described in Revelation 4, chapter 5 introduces a book—that is, a scroll. It is overflowing with content, written on both sides. Seven seals secure its contents and prevent it from being opened or seen before its time. The book contains God's plans, His foreordained destiny for the world.

Remember that John was led into heaven so that He might see what must happen in the future (4:1). Remember also what we learned in John's gospel, chapter 1, regarding the nature of God's Word. His Word is sovereign. It doesn't merely describe what will happen; it decrees what will happen. Thus the One opening the scroll doesn't merely reveal the world's destiny; He makes it happen.

No one is found in all of heaven or earth who could fulfill God's foreordained destiny for the world (5:2-3). No one can unfold His plan and make it happen. At this, John weeps (v.4). But the absence of anyone worthy proves to be simply a way of establishing that Christ alone is worthy to unfold God's will for human history (v.5).

Notice the way Christ is described in vv.5-6:

- He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Before his death, Jacob prophesied about each of his sons. He described Judah, from whom Messiah would descend, as a lion (Genesis 49:8-12). He would be fierce, one whom no one would dare challenge.
- He is the Root of David; that is, Messiah, the ultimate, eternal king.
- He has overcome; that is, He is risen from the dead.
- He is a Lamb, one that has been slain, a sacrifice.
- But He is no longer a meek, passive victim. This Lamb has seven horns, suggesting complete and irresistible power.
- He has seven eyes, representing the seven Spirits of God, suggesting complete sight, knowledge, and wisdom.

As this exalted, triumphant Lamb takes the scroll to unfold God's beautiful destiny for all creation, a crescendo of praise erupts in heaven. It begins with the 24 elders and the four living creatures immediately around the throne (vv.8-10). Then the mighty chorus of praise spreads outward to uncounted millions of angels (vv.11-12), then to every creature in heaven and earth (vv.13-14).

Christ alone is worthy to fulfill all God's destiny for us. He alone is worthy of all power, riches, wisdom, glory, and blessing. Why is He worthy? Because He purchased people with His own lifeblood, redeeming them from every tribe, tongue, and people (vv.9-10).

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