

# REVELATION

Seeing, Knowing and Serving Jesus Christ  
Today at the Edge of History

## Chapter 5

### Text: Revelation 5:1-14 - The Great Surprise

#### The Scroll and the Lamb

5 Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" 3 But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. 4 I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. 5 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7 He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the

throne. 8 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song:

"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

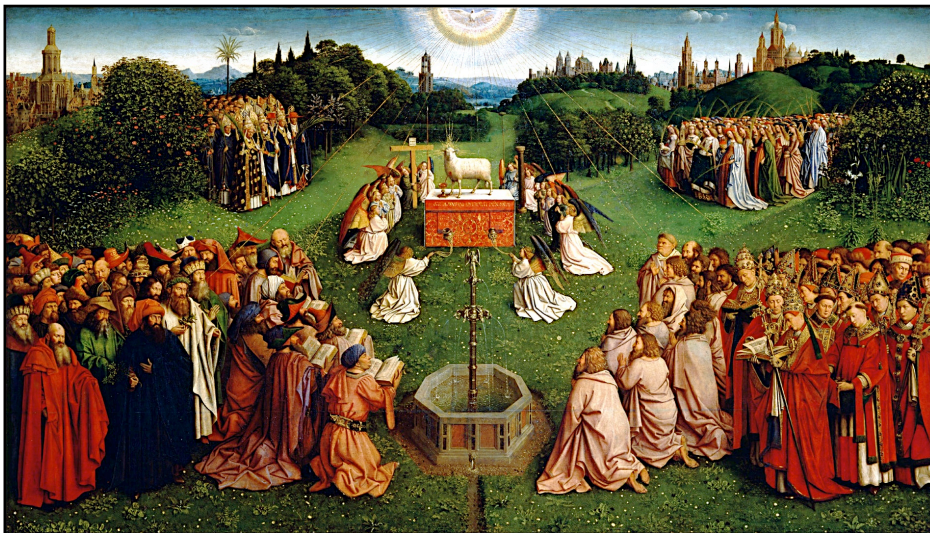
11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. 12 In a loud voice they sang:

"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing:

"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

14 The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.



Jan van Eyck, The Adoration of the Lamb, 1432

*"When the slaughtered Lamb is seen 'in the midst of' the diving throne in heaven (5:6; cf. 7:17), the meaning is that Christ's sacrificial death belongs to the way God rules the world. The symbol of the Lamb is no less a divine symbol than the symbol of 'the One who sits on the throne'... if God is not present in the world as 'the One who sits on the throne', he is present as the Lamb who conquers by suffering. Christ's suffering witness and sacrificial death are, in fact, as we shall see, the key event in God's conquest of evil and establishment of his kingdom on earth. Even more than the judgements which issue from the throne in heaven they constitute God's rule on earth. Moreover, Christ's presence (walking among the lampstands: 1:13; 2:1) with his people who continue his witness and sacrifice is also God's presence."*

- Richard Bauckham, The Theology of Revelation, p.64

*“The throne of God--the fact of the throne, and the fact of God enthroned--is the revelation of the Bible. The throne is the supreme revelation of scripture.” - Eugene Peterson, Reversed Thunder, p.61*

### Read & Reflect - 5:1-14

**First Reading/First Impression:** If you were directing this scene in the blockbuster movie “Revelation!” which of these elements would you want to bring out most? Why?

**Second Reading/The Big Idea:** Some commentators have suggested that Revelation 4 offers a pictorial summary of the *Old Testament* while Revelation 5 offers one for the *New Testament*. What is one element you see here that might support such an idea?

### Search

**Verses 1-2** - Who has the scroll and what is the question concerning it?

**vv. 3-4** - What is the answer to this question at first? Why do you suppose this is so significant and so upsetting?

**v. 5** - What is the new answer to the question? Why do you think John didn't receive this answer at first?

**v. 6** - Surprise! Expecting to see a Lion, John instead sees what? Who is this? How do you know?

How is the Lamb described?

**v. 7** - What does the Lamb do? What do you think the Lamb is going to do with the scroll?

**vv. 8-14** - What responses does this action elicit?

A. From the “inner circle” (The “4 Living Creatures” & the “24 Elders”)? (vv. 8-10, 14)

B. From the "outer circle" (The "many angels")? (vv. 11-12)

C. From the "farthest circle" ("Every Creature")? (v. 13)

What are the key words in the three worship songs of Revelation 5? (vv. 9-10, 12 & 13)



### Apply - 5:1-14

*...a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne...*

If this is an accurate picture of deepest reality, and by faith we believe that it is, the implications are immense. Spend sometime thinking about it...

Then jot down a few of your thoughts concerning the difference this makes to you.

*"Jesus does not change the divine plan; he unfolds its eternal and unchangeable nature by his obedience, even unto death on the cross."*

- Bruce Metzger,  
Breaking the Code, p.53

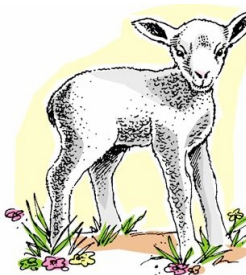


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**Summary...** Dr. Bruce Metzger in his commentary on Revelation, Breaking the Code, reminds us that John's primary purpose here "is not so much to describe the liturgy of heaven, as to give hope and a sense of victory to his people on earth in the struggle that lies ahead" (p.54). This is accomplished with power in one of the great moments in all of the bible...

John hears about a lion. Then suddenly what he sees before him is "a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne." The Lamb's position--in the center of where God is seated (see 4:3)--conveys to us Christ's place within the unity of God (John's glimpse of the Trinity). His appearance--post sacrifice--has universe-shaking implications (see the quote on p.1). Some commentators point out that the scene here in Revelation 4-5 is the same as in Isaiah 6:1-8, but with a couple of amazing changes. The song to God is "Holy, holy, holy" both times, but (a) Isaiah's "seraphs" (angelic beings, covering their faces with their wings because



*"This is perhaps the most mind-wrenching 'rebirth of images' in literature. The slot in the system reserved for the lion has been filled by the Lamb of God." - Eugene Boring, Revelation, p.108*

they cannot look upon the LORD Almighty, are replaced by Revelation's "four living creatures" (beings from earth) who have wings "covered with eyes" watching everything, taking it all in! And (b) the prophet Isaiah when confronted with this vision of heaven assumes he is going to die immediately and cries out "Woe to me! I am ruined!" while John later sees the same scene and simply keeps listening and watching and makes no assumption that his death is imminent. Why are things different? Because

Jesus' work is finished. **The Lamb has been slain!!!...**

Verse 1 - "scroll"... rolled up papyrus, the time-consuming and expensive 1st-century method for collecting and saving written material (books weren't invented until the next century)... "seven seals"... making the scroll perfectly impenetrable

v.2 - "open the scroll"... reveal the full story of what God is doing and put it into effect (You can't reveal a plan without simultaneously, in some way, at some level, activating it)... Unveil

The Almighty's glorious plan for human history, His final judgment against sin and wrong of every kind, His establishment of His eternal kingdom in my life and yours... Who is worthy? Who is up to such a task?

vv.3-4 - "no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth... was found who was worthy"...

John weeps, as our world weeps, to hear that contained in not one of these places is anyone who can accomplish the task of giving real and lasting meaning to the world & to our lives... v.5 - "See"... ("Look!" - IDOU)... the same command we've seen before...

"Lion... of Judah... Root of Jesse"... from Old Testament prophecies understood to refer to Israel's Messiah (Genesis 49:9 & Isaiah 11:1)

v.6 - "Then I saw a Lamb..." The Great Surprise (see summary above)... "The might of Christ is the power of

love... Instead of a ferocious lion that hurts others, the Messiah is a sacrificial lamb that takes into himself the hurts of others." (Metzger, p.52) "in the center"... in the place of God, in the middle of everything... "seven horns"... symbol of absolute power and authority... "seven eyes"... indicates complete knowledge

v.8 - "bowls full of

### Genesis 49:8-10

(Jacob's blessing of his 4th son, Judah)  
8 "Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you.  
9 You are a lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him?  
10 The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.

incense... prayers of the saints"... this beautiful image of God's people's prayers brought to Him by his inner circle of heavenly worshippers as bowls of pleasing aromas will reappear powerfully in chapter 8... vv.7-14 - "He came and took the scroll..." The action of the Lamb sets in motion three cosmic waves of profound worship (to the Lamb!):

A. A "new song" from the four living creatures and the 24 elders using the language and imagery of Israel's great moment of redemption and rescue--The Exodus (when the lambs' blood meant a Passover by the Angel of Death)...

B. A booming chorus of innumerable angels singing "Worthy!..." and adding seven (complete?) words of praise-- "...power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

C. A roar of agreement in song from every created being-- "To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and..."

### Isaiah 11:1-2, 10

(Prophecy regarding the line of King David's father, Jesse)  
A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.  
2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him— the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord...  
10 In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.