

## THE REVELATION TO JOHN

### THE THINGS FUTURE, REVELATION 4 - 22

#### JOHN'S INTRODUCTION TO HEAVEN, REVELATION 4 - 5

#### INTRODUCTION

- This section gives a proper perspective of God the Father and God the Son. The throne in heaven pictures the majesty of God. The vision should naturally instill in the reader a sense of reverence and awe. The vision of the Lamb reveals the Son of God as the one who has authority to execute the judgments about to be unleashed upon the earth. Jesus Christ is qualified to loose the scroll of God's judgments. He is savior and sovereign. Therefore, the judgments to be unleashed upon the earth are righteous acts of God upon an unbelieving world.
- Grant Osborne, . . . *the scroll is not only the repository of God's plan for ending this world but is also an official document affirming the Lamb's right to rule.*

#### THE SEALED BOOK, REVELATION 5:1-14

- A. A scroll in the hand of God (1), *Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.*
1. Other biblical texts
    - a. Ezekiel 2:9-10, *And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. 10 And he spread it before me. And it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe.*
    - b. Daniel 12:4, *But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.*
    - c. Isaiah 29:11, *And the vision of all this has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed. When men give it to one who can read, saying, "Read this," he says, "I cannot, for it is sealed."*
  2. Introductory notes
    - a. William Barclay, *We may get some idea of the dimensions of a roll from the following statistics. The books of 2 and 3 John, Jude and Philemon would each occupy one sheet of papyrus; Romans would require a roll 11½ feet long; Mark, 19 feet; John, 23½ feet; Matthew, 30 feet; Luke and Acts, 32 feet. Revelation itself would occupy a roll 15 feet long. It was such a roll that was in the hand of God.*
    - b. Thomas Constable, *John next saw a scroll upon God's opened right hand. It was in His hand, but He was not grasping it but was about to hand it over. The right hand is a common symbol of power. It suggests God's authority and power to act as He sat on the throne.*
    - c. John Walvoord, *The symbolic presentation showed a scroll or a rolled-up parchment with seven seals affixed to the side in such a way that if unrolled the seven seals would need to be broken one by one.*
    - d. Warren Wiersbe, *The scroll could not be read because it was rolled up and sealed (like a Roman will) with seven seals. John could see writing on both sides of the scroll, which meant that nothing more could be added. What was written was completed and final.*
    - e. Grant Osborne, *The seven seals point to completeness, the fullness of the divine plan. It is perfect, and is to be unveiled at the perfect God-chosen time. The seals must be opened as preliminary events to the unveiling of this final plan.*
  3. Contents of the scroll
    - a. There are a number of opinions concerning the contents of the scroll, including, the Lamb's book of life, the events of the Tribulation, a record of the sins of mankind, a testament or will.
    - b. Mark Hitchcock, *When the context and evidence are considered, the best view is that the seven-sealed scroll is a will. A will was the only document in the first-century world that was closed with seven seals . . . the scroll with the seven seals portrays the believers' inheritance, which is to rule with Christ over the world to come, or the 1000-year kingdom on earth that Christ established at His second advent (Revelation 20:4-6; see also Hebrews 2:5).*
    - c. Kendell Easley, *This is God's Judgment Scroll, his plan long ago made to condemn wickedness and reward righteousness. If God is the one who made the plan, then God's Son is the only one worthy to enact the plan.*

- d. Thomas Constable, *The scroll contained the prophecies that follow in Revelation 6–22. This scroll may be the unrevealed part of the book of prophecies that God had instructed Daniel to seal until the end times (Dan. 12:4, 9).*
- e. Grant Osborne, *The contract deed is the covenant between God and humankind, and the world of evil has refused to keep God’s covenant stipulations. They have rejected their contract with God and so are facing the covenant curses. The rest of the book then tells how these curses will take place and traces the judgment of the nations. In this sense, this contract points to the events in the rest of the book that will bring God’s plan to completion. God’s redemptive plan was made necessary by the effects of sin, and it is anchored in the atoning sacrifice of Christ in 1:5; 5:6, 12; 13:8.*

B. Concern over who could open the scroll (2-4)

1. The proclamation of a mighty angel (2), ***And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?”***

a. Other biblical texts

- 1) Revelation 10:1, *Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire.*
- 2) Revelation 18:21, *Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more;*

b. A concern proclaimed by a mighty angel.

- 1) Charles Ryrie, *The problem was to find someone who was worthy to open the scroll.*
- 2) Thomas Constable, *The specific identity of the strong angel is probably unknowable; John did not reveal it. This angel’s loud voice indicated his authority and the importance of what he said . . . Any prophet could have revealed this information, but it took someone with adequate power to both reveal the events foretold and to execute them.*
- 3) William Barclay, . . . *the angel had to be strong so that the challenge of his voice might reach throughout the universe. His summons was that anyone worthy of the task should come forward and open the book.*
- 4) Kendell Easley, *The mighty angel was not one of the living creatures or one of the elders . . . This may even be Gabriel (Luke 1:19), but we do not know for sure. John is more interested in the question he heard the angel proclaiming in a loud voice.*
- 5) Grant Osborne, *The mighty angel, probably an archangel, appears at critical junctures in Revelation to introduce key events: here, 10:1–2 (the second half of this scroll), and 18:21 (the destruction of Babylon the Great). As a royal herald, he brings a proclamation from the King calling for a worthy agent to instigate the events . . . Likely this is not a moral or spiritual worthiness so much as it is an inherent sufficiency to stand in for God. Authority is in view here more than virtue.*

2. No one was found worthy to open the scroll (3-4)

a. The declaration of the mighty angel (3), ***And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it,***

- 1) Charles Ryrie, *First, there was a search, which yielded no one able to break the seals and open the scroll. The threefold characterization of the universe in verse 3 is the same as in Philippians 2:10. This failure to find any qualified person shows the complete helplessness of humankind.*
- 2) Kendell Easley, *No created being was worthy (morally deserving of the privilege of unleashing the judgments of God on his sinful universe).*
- 3) Grant Osborne, *This threefold division refers to the whole of creation. “Under the earth” is probably not a reference to the Old Testament saints in the grave; everywhere in Revelation it is used of the underworld, home of demonic forces/fallen angels. This means that neither good angels nor fallen angels, neither saints nor sinners, have the power or authority . . . to open the scroll.*
- 4) George Ladd, *What simpler and more sublime way of picturing God’s ultimate sovereignty over all history could be found than this picture of the scroll resting in the hand of God? However strong evil becomes, however fierce be the satanic evils that assail God’s people on earth, history still rests in God’s hand.*

b. The response of John (4), ***and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.***

- 1) Charles Ryrie, . . . *there was sorrow and sobbing on the part of John, because it appeared as if there were no one who could redeem the inheritance.*
- 2) Thomas Constable, *John's continual weeping reflected his great sorrow that the revelation of God's plans and their execution would remain hidden because no one apparently had sufficient authority ("was found worthy") to open the scroll or to look into it.*
- 3) William Barclay . . . *John begins to weep bitterly. There were two reasons for his tears. (1) In 4:1, the voice had made the promise to him: 'I will show you what must take place after this.' It now looked as if the promise had been frustrated. (2) There is a deeper reason for his sorrow. It seemed to him that there was no one in the whole universe to whom God could reveal his mysteries. Here, indeed, was a terrible situation.*

C. The Lamb is worthy to open the scroll (5-7)

1. An elder declared that only one is worthy (5), ***And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."***

a. The elder's encouraging proclamation

- 1) Charles Ryrie, . . . *one of the elders stopped John and announced that Christ would open the scroll.*
- 2) Thomas Constable, *One of the 24 elders comforted John with the news that Jesus Christ would be able to open the scroll (cf. Luke 7:13; 8:52).*
- 3) John Walvoord, *One of the 24 elders, however, told him not to weep, and introduced him to the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David (cf. Isa. 11:1; Rev. 22:16). The elder informed John that He had triumphed, that is, had already achieved victory, and that He alone was able to break the seals and open the scroll.*

b. Jesus Christ identified by two titles

- 1) William Barclay, . . . *because of his victory over death and all the powers of evil and because of his complete obedience to God, he is able to know God's secrets; he is able to reveal God's secrets; and it is his privilege and duty to control the things which shall be. Because of what Jesus did, he is the Lord of truth and of history. He is called by two great titles . . . The two titles of Jesus, then, point in the direction of both his deity (as the ultimate divine source of David) and his humanity (as the royal lion from Judah).*
- 2) Charles Ryrie, *He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah (cf. Gen. 49:8-10), the Root of David, and the heir to the throne and promises made to David (2 Sam. 7: Matt. 22:42-43; Luke 1:31-33). Both descriptions emphasize Christ's kingship as the noblest Son (Lion) of the kingly tribe (Judah) and as the One greater than King David who will ultimately fulfill the promises of the Davidic covenant by ruling on the throne of David.*
- 3) Thomas Constable, *The elder described Jesus as the Lion from the tribe of Judah and the root of David. The Lion of Judah (Gen. 49:9) and the Root (offspring) of David (Isa. 11:1, 10; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Matt. 22:42-43; Rom. 15:12) are both titles of the divine Messiah who would fulfill the Old Testament promises of salvation and rule. This is the only place in the New Testament where these titles occur together. As God's ultimate Anointed One, Jesus alone possessed the authority necessary for these tasks. He had achieved victory over ("has overcome") all of His enemies and therefore had the authority to open the scroll and to break its seals. Christ overcame Satan, sin, and death, so He alone could implement God's purposes for the future that this scroll revealed.*
- 4) Grant Osborne, *Together these titles picture Jesus as the royal Messiah waging a messianic war against evil and evildoers, with the major weapon being the cross. It is this cosmic victory that enables him to open the scroll.*
- 5) Warren Wiersbe, . . . *As far as His humanity is concerned, Jesus had His roots in David (Isa. 11:1, 10); but as far as His deity is concerned, Jesus is the Root of David.*

2. His description (6), ***And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.***

a. The location of the worthy One.

- 1) Kendell Easley, *Surely only under divine inspiration would the conquering, powerful victor of the universe be portrayed as a Lamb. It was in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders, more literally "in the middle of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the middle of the elders"—that is, at the focal point of the throne room.*
- 2) John Walvoord, *The Lion and the Lamb surely refer to Christ, with the Lamb referring to His first coming and His death and the Lion referring to His second coming and His sovereign judgment of the world.*

- 3) Charles Ryrie, *He is standing in the midst of the throne. A standing lamb is a contradiction of ideas, but well represents the majesty and meekness of the Lamb of God. In heaven the Lord is seen both as seated (in relation to the finished aspect of his work of redemption). Here He is standing ready to complete His work and assume the reins of power and government that are rightfully His.*
- 4) Warren Wiersbe, *But where is Christ in heaven? He is in the midst. The Lamb is the center of all that transpires in heaven. All creation centers in Him (the four living creatures), as do all of God's people (the elders). The angels around the throne encircle the Saviour and praise Him.*
- 5) Thomas Constable, *As with our dreams, John's visions contained some unusual features. John saw the Messiah as a Lamb. The diminutive form of amnos (lamb), namely arnion (little lamb), enhances even more the contrast with the Lion of Judah. The lion is a picture of strength and majesty, but this little lamb was meek and gentle. Christ combines both sets of characteristics. The lamb is a symbol of Jesus Christ at His first advent, meek and submissive to a sacrificial death as our substitute (Isa. 53:7; John 1:36; 21:15) . . . The lion is a symbol of Him at His second advent, powerful and aggressively judging the world in righteousness (Ps. 2).*

b. A description of the Lamb

1) *as though it had been slain*

- a) Charles Ryrie, *The emphasis is not on the Crucifixion, but on the Resurrection, since the slain lamb is standing, not lying dead. This description also seems to indicate that the marks of His death remain unaltered throughout eternity to remind His people of the cost of their redemption.*
- b) Thomas Constable, *John saw the Lamb now, in the center of all the angelic creatures gathered around the throne, as the central character and most important personage in the entire heavenly scene (cf. 3:21; 4:6; 7:17). The Lamb was standing, ready to complete His work, and bearing the marks (wounds, scars) of His death ("as if slaughtered"). His self-sacrifice qualified Him for supreme power.*
- c) Robert Mounce, *In one brilliant stroke John portrays the central theme of NT revelation—victory through sacrifice.*

2) *with seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God*

- a) Charles Ryrie, *Horns are found everywhere in the Bible as a symbol of strength (! Kings 22:11; Zech. 1:18). Death has not weakened him . . . His seven eyes represent the fullness of the Spirit of God scrutinizing all the earth.*
- b) Grant Osborne, *He also has seven horns in 5:6b, meaning he is not just a lamb but a conquering ram; lambs do not have horns, but rams do. This adds militaristic overtones: in 1 Enoch 90:9–12, the horned ram is a messianic conqueror who leads the people of God to victory . . . The Gospel of John depicts the Spirit as being sent by the Father and the Son to carry out their mission to the world (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7). Here that mission is extended further to include aspects of both redemption and judgment.*
- c) Thomas Constable, *The Lamb had seven horns, representing the fullness of His power . . . John saw the Lamb as the all-powerful Warrior and King. The Lamb also had seven eyes, representing the fullness of His divine wisdom and discernment (Zech. 4:10) . . . What are these seven spirits of God? We have met them before in Revelation (cf. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5). Of all the possible interpretations, I believe that they refer to the full energy and operation of God's Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. It was the Holy Spirit who empowered Christ during His earthly ministry, and it is the same Holy Spirit who continues to empower Him.*
- d) William Barclay, *Here is a tremendous picture of Christ. He is the fulfilment of all the hopes and dreams of Israel, for he is the Lion of Judah and the Root of David. He is the one whose sacrifice was for the benefit of all people, and who still bears the marks of it in the heavenly places. But the tragedy has turned to triumph and the shame to glory; and he is the one whose all-conquering might no one can withstand and whose all-seeing eye no one can escape.*
- e) Kendell Easley, *This text, along with others in the New Testament, became the basis for the Christian theological statement that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit was sent out into all the earth by the Lord Jesus beginning on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:8; 2:4; 10:44).*

3. He received the scroll (7), ***And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.***

- a. John Walvoord, *Because He alone is worthy, the Lamb took the scroll from the right hand of Him who sat on the throne (cf. Dan. 7:9, 13–14).*
- b. Charles Ryrie, *It is this One who, not as an interloper but as the legitimate heir, takes the scroll out of the hand of God on the throne. It is one of the most climactic acts in all history, for it assures the regaining of all that was lost.*

- c. Thomas Constable, *Next John saw God the Father on the throne and the Lamb (personified) coming and taking the scroll out of His right hand . . . Clearly this symbolizes a transfer of authority from the Father to the Son who in turn would reveal the future and execute judgment (cf. 1:1). Jesus previously said, "... the Father ... has given all judgment to the Son" and "He [the Father] gave Him [the Son] authority to execute judgment" (John 5:22, 27).*
- c. George Beasley-Murray, *It has been frequently recognized that the vision of chapter 5 gives us a Christian prophet's version of the enthronement ceremony known to the ancient world, when its potentates ascended their thrones. Here the king is the Christ, his domain the universe, and his throne the throne of God . . . The steps of the ancient enthronement are commonly described as exaltation, presentation, enthronement. If we apply these to chapter 5, the exaltation must be seen in the conquest of the Lamb referred to in 5:5, the presentation in verse 6, and the bestowal of authority in verse 7.*
- d. William Barclay, *Few passages of Scripture show at one and the same time what Swete called 'the majesty and the meekness' of Jesus Christ and in the one picture combine the humiliation of his death and the glory of his risen life.*
- e. Kendall Easley, *The Lamb came and took the scroll from God without objection or delay. This demonstrates the Lamb's worthiness and ability to unleash the judgments contained in the scroll. The Son perfectly carries out what the Father has determined.*
- f. Grant Osborne, . . . *there is a transfer of sovereign authority from God to the Lamb who is already at the center of the throne (5:6). This becomes a type of investiture scene as Jesus steps forward, takes the scroll, and is given control over it. The Son in this sense assumes his royal mantle and proves he indeed is worthy to take the scroll. The Lamb will now execute the divinely mandated plan and bring history to a close.*

**TO BE CONTINUED, LORD WILLING!**

D. Worship of the Lamb (8-14)

1. The four living creatures and the 24 elders worshiped the Lamb with a new song (8-10), *And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each 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 scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, 10 and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."*
2. Many angels joined in worship of the Lamb (11-12), *Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"*
3. Worship of the Lamb by all of creation (13), *And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!"*
4. Culmination of worship (14), *And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.*

<b>CONCLUSION</b>
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