

## **Revelation: The Triumph of the Lamb**

Behold Your God (4-5)

*The Scroll, The Lamb, The Plan*

5:1-14

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The key word that connects chapter 5 with chapter 4 is “worthy.”

### 1. Scroll<sup>1</sup>

- a. Scroll as opposed to a codex. Codices were invented in the 1<sup>st</sup> Cent. But they were not common. This is important because of the symbolism.
- b. “written on the inside and outside.”
  - Paper was made of two kinds: animal skins (parchment) and papyrus a plant with similar consistency as celery or rhubarb.
  - Ancient scrolls were made by taking strips of the papyrus and gluing another layer over top. The inside page was used for writing horizontally. They would not write across the back since they would write over the ridges of the papyrus.
  - Sheets would be sewn or glued together up to 32-34 feet in length. (Luke would have taken an entire scroll. Acts is a second volume).
  - The fact that we are told it was written on both sides is significant for the symbolism because it is not normal. The only time you would write on the back is when you were poor and could not afford paper or if the document was extremely important and you did not want to affix more paper for fear they may get separated. Legal document, for example were written on front and back.
  - The meaning of the symbolism here, then, is that this contains the fullness of the material. This is all of it.
  - The scroll contains all of God’s purposes for redemption and judgment.
- c. “in the right hand” – the hand of his power.
- d. “sealed with seven seals”
  - The way a document was sealed in ancient times was to take another sheet and wrap it around the outside. Then they would drop wax on the edge and mark it with a signet ring, perhaps. If it was really official, it carried a legal seal. In fact, according to D.A. Carson, we have historic evidence that the Emperor Vespasian’s last will and testament was sealed with 7 seals.
  - This signifies that the scroll in God’s right hand is a very official, highly classified document. Only authorized persons could break the seals (which will occur in ch. 6).
  - The breaking of the seals signified the enactment of the document. Probate, for example occurred once the lawyer, broke the seals to carry out the deceased person’s wishes.
  - So here, the significance of the seals being broken in the next chapter has nothing to do with taking a peak into the future. Instead, it has everything to do with God’s purposes being carried out.

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<sup>1</sup> I follow the outline and basic content from an unpublished lecture by D.A. Carson.

- Who was authorized?
2. Challenge
- The challenge makes sense only in light of ch 4.
  - To get to this God one would have to traverse the sea of glass, get through the numerous rows and layers of heavenly creatures – powerful angels and be able to withstand the sheer terror of the God of glory from whose throne flashes lightning and peals of thunder.
  - Who has attributes so majestic as to accomplish such a feat? You don't just walk up to God and take the scroll from his hand. You have to be authorized. That is, you have to be worthy.
  - After the challenge went out all that was heard was silence. No one was found (v.3)
    - Heaven – none of the majestic creatures – seraphim or cherubim
    - Earth – no man
    - Under the earth – the domain of the dead, no spirit good or evil
    - Nothing or no one in all of the universe was found worthy for carrying out God's purposes.

What does all of this mean?

3. Tears

- Why is John driven to tears?
- If opening the seals simply means getting a sneak-peak at the future, then why would he be in tears? But, in fact, if we understand the symbolism properly, he is in tears because God's purposes in redemption and judgment cannot be carried out.
- John represents a persecuted church. He is one of the apostles. He is a brother in suffering according to 1:9. Is there in any meaning to all of this suffering? Is it hopeless and meaningless?
- Apart from the purposes of God all of life is meaningless and hopeless. Will evil win after all?

4. Lion

- For the second time in the book we have this “hear” / “see” motif. John hears something and then turns to see something. But what is unique to this motif is that what he hears in OT and Jewish when what he turns to see is NT and church. The first was in ch. 1:10, 12 when he heard the voice of an OT shofar and turned to see the Son of man.
- Here he hears the elder, the angelic interpreter says, “Behold the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the root of David.”
- This is clearly OT imagery. All the way from Genesis 49:9-10, the Messiah was promised to pass through the line of Judah which is called the lion's whelp. Remember? In Isaiah 11:1,10 he is called the root of David. This is clear language referring to the Jewish Messiah.
- This lion is said to have conquered. That is, there has been a mighty battle and he has prevailed. We have not yet learned the nature of this conquering; we will in the next verses; but he has triumphed.

5. Lamb

- When John turns to see this victorious lion, he sees no lion at all; instead he sees a lamb. This is clearly NT. And this is no mere lamb standing there; it is a slaughtered lamb – a brutal word.
- It is not as though there are two creatures standing there a lion and a lamb – there is only one; the lion is the lamb. This is not meant to evoke a picture you can draw; it is meant to evoke a mental image that carries with it a ton of theological truth in a sentence. The OT Messiah is the slaughtered lamb.
- We now know a little more about this conquest – the lion is a sacrificial lamb. This is clearly Jesus, who already in ch.1 said he was dead and is alive forevermore (1:18). This is a victorious lamb – a triumphant lamb.
- Notice several things about his description:
  - (1) He is in the midst of the throne. He is God.
  - (2) He has seven horns – perfect kingly rule
  - (3) He has seven eyes – perfect omniscience
- “and he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.” The only one who can carry out the purposes of God in redemption and judgment is none other than God himself; and could not be done apart from a willing sacrificial death. God himself suffered and died and is worthy to carry out the divine purposes for redemption.

## 6. Song

The very same creatures are worshipping the Lamb in the very same manner that they worshipped Him who sits on the throne.

This is a joyous occasion (harps).

Notice that the prayers of the saints come into God’s presence only because there is a slain Lamb.

This is a new song. What makes it a new song? It is a song in response to a new work of God in redemption. Up to this point they had only been declaring the wrath of God based on his work in creation. Now they sing in a tone of freshness declaring the worth of God in his work of redemption. (Israel sang new songs each time showed a fresh display of power – Exodus, etc.)

Notice the themes of this song

1. Violence – by your blood
2. Reconciliation – for God
3. Racial equality – every language, tribe and tongue – for the world
4. Victory – they will reign on the earth – efficacious