

Chapter 1

Seven-sealed Scroll of the Lamb (5:1–14)

Overview

1. Rev. 4 reveals the heavenly throne where Father is worshiped.
2. Rev. 5 reveals a scroll and the one who is qualified to open it.
3. Four new scenes

- (a) 5:1. seven-sealed scroll in the Father's possession
- (b) 5:2–5. Credentials necessary to open the scroll
- (c) 5:6–10. Transfer of the scroll to the Lamb.
- (d) 5:11–14. Universal tribute to the worthy Lamb.

1.1 The seven-sealed scroll with the Father (5:1)

Revelation 5:1

And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

1. **I saw:** Seven sealed scroll in the Father's possession. What John saw was the four new scenes (5:1; 5:2-5; 5:6-10; 5:11-14) of the vision currently in progress. The scroll comprises essentially the remainder of this revelation.
2. **Hand:** the scroll lies on the open palm of the one sitting upon the throne. The position of the scroll in God's possession indicated its divine source, the supreme authority of the revelation contained in it and the

assurance of adequate power to translate its contents into action.

3. **Scroll (biblion)**: was made by procession either papyrus or skin from different kinds of animals and several OT parallels exist

Isa 29:11. The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one who is literate, saying, "Read this, please." And he says, "I cannot, for it is sealed."

Jer 36:10-25. Then Baruch read from the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the Lord . . . 23 And it happened, when Jehudi had read three or four columns, that the king cut it with the scribe's knife and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the scroll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth . . .

Ezk 2:9-10. Now when I looked, there was a hand stretched out to me; and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. 10 Then He spread it before me; and there was writing on the inside and on the outside, and written on it were lamentations and mourning and woe

Dan 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."

4. **Inside and on the back:** refers to inside the scroll before unrolling and to the backside of the scroll after it is unrolled. Note that considering the time and location of John, it could not have been in a book form but in the form of a scroll. Note that the scroll reflects the kind of contract that was common in Roman and Jewish world. Full contract written inside and the summary outside and used in all legal transactions (Jer 32:10-14).
5. **written:** What is written? At least six answers are proposed: (i) the new covenant with humanity, (ii) will of inheritance, (iii) same as the book of life, (iv) redemptive plan of God, (v) Christ's contract-deed to the world he created, and (vi) the counsels of God enacted from chapter 6 onward. The last one is to be adopted as it matches with the rest of the book. Thus the contents of the scroll is a history of the future that give the successive steps leading to the inauguration of the world-kingdom of Jesus. Although there is no reading mentioned but the contents are enacted. Later discussions will show that the seven seal contains the seven trumpet judgments (Rev 8:6-11:15) and that the seven trumpet contains the seven bowls of wrath (Rev 16-19). It is a scroll of doom (Dan 10:21). The eternal and almighty God of Rev 4 presents this seven-sealed scroll the decrees of His will regarding the consummation of His kingdom. Later when the Lamb breaks the seal, it is not merely a disclosure of the contents of the scroll, but an activation of those contents. The hidden destiny of the world is about to end (Isa 29:11; Dan 8:26). The purging effect of God's wrath will touch the entire sphere of God's creation (4:11, Rom 8:18-25). The effect of sin will disappear, and earth will be restored to its rightful owner.

6. **Written inside and back:** symbolizes the fullness of the contents (Ezk 2:10). The decrees of God contained herein are extensive and comprehensive. They constitute the whole counsel of God regarding the future of the world and no further revelation may be anticipated (Rev 22:18).
7. **Sealed with seven seals:** means the seals are secure and the scroll is closed (Isa 29:11-12).

1.2 Credentials necessary to open the scroll (5:2–5)

Revelation 5:2

Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?”

1. **Then:** Credentials necessary to open the scroll is discussed here. The issue of worthiness is first raised by the strong angel.
2. **Strong Angel:** Gabriel functions as a messenger of God (Dan 8:16; 9:21; Luke 1:19; 26) and was the one who ordered Daniel to close and seal the book. Michael is an arc-angel and has special interest in the events of

the last days (Dan 12:1-3; Jude 9). If it is either of the case, then John would have mentioned. Because it is not, he is best left unnamed and identified only as a might angel who performs Gods will.

3. **Loud voice:** is a demonstration of his strength.
4. **Who is worthy:** refers to the quality of the person that can be either the inner moral one or the external ability to open the seven-sealed scroll. Here it refers to worthiness to the both the office of Christ and His moral competency. Rev 5:9 bases His worthiness based on His redemptive death and in 5:5 the worthiness is tied to His Messianic office.
5. **To open the scroll and even to break its seals:** both are nearly identical activities (5:5). It is not only telling the prophesies of the scroll, but also the ability to make them come true as evident from chapter 6 onwards where the Lamb breaks the seals and execute the actions.

Revelation 5:3

And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.

1. **No one was able:** apparently, a search among the creation to find out whether anyone is capable of opening the seal revealed the absence of anyone. The creation is utterly incapable of enacting the contents of the scroll.
2. **In heaven or on the earth or under the earth:** is three fold division of the creative world (Ex 20:4, 11, Ps 146:6; Phil 2:10) and clearly refers to the whole universe. The angles in heaven, the people on the earth, and the departed souls and daemons under the earth are all incapable of the job.
3. **Look at it:** because of the inability to enact the contents of the scroll, no one is able to read it.

Revelation 5:4

So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.

1. **Because:** why John wept? John feared the events portrayed in the scroll may not be fulfilled, that is the plan of God to establish his kingdom is likely to be postponed indefinitely. It means more suffering the people of God and continuation of the reign of evil and sin on the world.

Revelation 5:5

But one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.”

1. **Elder:** merely function as a mediator as angels do (Rev 7:13; 17:1; 21:9).
2. **Stop crying:** such sorrow is in appropriate just as Jesus said (Lk 7:13; 8:52). It is appropriate to the joyful occasion.
3. **Prevailed:** or overcame is powerful word used in the context of the victories of Gods people (2:7; 11; 12:12; 15:2). Jesus also will conquer the enemies of His Kingdom.
4. **Lion of Judah:** or the lion who is of the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:9). Lion indicate strength, majesty, courage, etc. which resembles the qualities of the king of the jungle.
5. **Root of David:** or the off spring of David. Jesus will the head of the new Kingdom (Isa 11:1; 10; Jer 23:5; 33:15). However, here to focus is the suffering of Jesus to bring salvation and his identification with humanity.

1.3 Transfer of the scroll to the Lamb (5:6-10)

Revelation 5:6

And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

1. **In the midst:** Lamb is standing in the centre of all the angelic creatures, both living beings and elders, who surround the throne (Rev 7:17) however beside the father

Act 7:56. ... Look! I [Stephen] see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!

Heb 10:12. This Man [Jesus] ... sat down at the right hand of God

2. **Lamb (arnion):** semi-technical term to describe the crucified Messiah used only in John 21:5 (translated as little Lamb) outside Rev where it occurs 29 times; a related term amnos used in John 1:29, 36, Act 8:32; 1Pet 1:19 and translated as Lamb. Jesus combines the meekness and gentleness of a Lamb with the majesty of a lion.

John 21:9. Then Jesus said to them, “Children (arinion), have you any food?

3. **Standing as one slain:** which speaks of the supreme self-sacrifice leads to His supreme power. The marks of his death are visible, but because of His resurrection, they are not fatal. This is a present and eternal reality which enabled Him to open the seven-sealed scroll. The slain is a picture of the Passover Lamb in the gospel of John (1:29; 19:14; 31-36) and Isa 53:7.

John 1:29. John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God ...

Isa 53:7. ... he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent ...

4. **Seven horns:** horn is a symbol of strength or power and the number seven indicates perfection, then the picture is that of an all-powerful warrior and king (Num 23:22; Deut 33:17; Dan 7:20-21; 8:5).

Dan 7:21. I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them

5. **Seven eyes:** representing perfect sight, intelligence, and wisdom in their fullness, that is omniscience. Nothing escapes the notice of the Lamb.

Zech 4:10. For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see ... They are the eyes of the Lord, Which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth

6. **Seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth:** Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son, just as the Son proceeds from the Father and He is sent as an official representative. Holy Spirit is Christ's agent on the earth. This close relationship is represented symbolically through horn and eyes

Jh 15:26. But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me

Revelation 5:7

Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

1. **He came and took:**

- (a) Lamb is already at the center at the right hand of Father, now position Himself to accept the scroll from the Father. The scene reminds of Dan 7:9-14.

Dan 7:9-14. I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a

fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire; . . . And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, . . . 14 Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. . . . And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.

- (b) By permitting the Lamb to take the scroll, the one sitting upon the throne authorizes the Lamb in a symbolic way to execute His plan for the redemption of the world.
- (c) Note that: John might have seen the Lamb as lamb at the beginning and now the human form which is required for the actions like receiving the scroll, opening the seal, riding on the horse etc. (6:1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 12; 8:1, 19:11).
- (d) What occurs here is dramatic description of transaction that affects the future course of the world including all mankind.

Revelation 5:8

Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

1. **Fell down before the Lamb:** evokes an overwhelming response from the angelic beings. Christ is worthy to receive the scroll implies fulfillment of its contents leading the institution of the promised kingdom. (App: be excited about the prospects of Gods purposes – it is true worship).
2. **Each one having:** grammar, priestly function of the elders, and descriptive role of the living beings all favour to the possibility that only the elders have the harp and bowl.
3. **Harp:** most used OT instrument for worship. It indicates joy and gladness (1 Chr 25:1, 6; 2 Chr 29:25; Ps 71:22; 92:3; 149:3).
4. **Golden bowl:** a container with large open mouth used for offering incense by the priests ministering at the altar (Ex 27:3; Num 4:14; 2Chr 4:21-22; Zech 14:20).
5. **Full of incense, which are the prayer of the saints:** describe the worship of heaven. Efficacy of an offering as acceptable comes only when accompanied by incense. It is a symbol of the prayers of the saints ascending from earth to heaven (Ps 141:2; Luke 1:10). Rev 8:3 also confirm the Jewish notion that the angels are the carriers of the prayers of men.
6. **Saints:**

- (a) The identity of these saints could be all NT saints is unlikely since they would be praising than praying in the heaven.
- (b) On the other hand Rev 6:9-11; 12:17; 13:7-10 all points to the presence of saints during the tribulation who cry to God for vengeance.

Rev 6:10. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

- (c) This is a legitimate payer

Lk 18:7-8. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? 8 I tell you that He will avenge them speedily

- (d) Their prayer is symbolic of paving the way to opening of the seven seals.
- (e) Application: role of prayer in fulfilling Gods plan.

Revelation 5:9

And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

1. **They:** transferring of the scroll prompted the 4 living beings (4:8) and 24 elders to sing the song. The rest of creation also joined them later (5:13).
2. **New:** in a deeper sense of the new things which is more glories than the past things (Ps 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isa 42:9-10). Newness is in relation to the quality than temporal.
3. **Worthy:** is the theme of the new song just like the Father in 4:11 so is also the Son here. He too is God. In addition, the reason for worthiness is twofold: his slain and his redemption.
4. **Slain:** referring the death of Jesus on the cross, an action once for all completed (13:8).
5. **Redeemed:**
 - (a) Christ has purchased the saints by His death.
 - (b) Redeem is a slave market term (1 Cor 6:20; 7:23; Gal 3:13; 1 Pet 1:18-19; 2 Pet 2:1).

1 Cor 6:20. For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's
 - (c) Also note that in the immediate and broader context this redemption is not merely from the sin, but of an emancipation that results in the creation of a new people of God to rule upon the earth (5:10)

(d) Application: the redemption in us is from slaves to rulers!

6. **To God by Your blood:** purchased for serving God and the cost of it is very high.

7. **Out of every:**

(a) The phrase indicates from all conceivable background.

(b) It is not universal but partial as only those who put faith on the Lord alone receives salvation

1 Jh 2:2. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world

(c) Phrase used in Rev 7:9; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6 has its origin in Daniel 3:4, 7, 29; 5:19; 6:25; 7:14.

Dan 7:14. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him ...

(d) Application: not to blame background.

8. **Tribe:** same descent, belong to same clan united by family lineage.

9. **Tongue:** people speaking same language.

10. **People:** unites a people of same race or interests.
11. **Nation:** bound together by political unity. People of every lineage, language, race, and political orientation receives the benefit of Christ's redemption.

Revelation 5:10

And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

1. Kings and priests:

- (a) the result of the redemption is establishment as kings and priests (1:6, 20:6).
- (b) The redeemed also will also share with Jesus in the rule in the millennial kingdom

1 Cor 6:3. Do you not know that we shall judge angels? ...

- (c) Priest will have access to the throne of God

Ex 19:6. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel

1 Pet 2:5. you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ

2. **Reign on earth:** believers will rule with the Lord both in the millennial kingdom and in the eternal state

Rev 20:4. And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them.
...And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years

Rev 22:5. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever

1.4 Universal tribute to the worthy Lamb (5:11–14)

Revelation 5:11

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,

1. **Then I looked:** is a universal tribute to the worth Lamb.
2. **Many angels:** all kinds of angels now join the worship. The number defies calculation, but denotes extremely high number

Dan 7:10. ...A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him ...

Ps 68:17. The chariots of God are twenty thousand, Even thousands of thousands ...

Revelation 5:12

saying with a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

1. **Worthy:** angelic worship for the redemption and angels are interested in the redemptive work (Eph 3:10; 1Pet 1:12). Seven words in this doxology.
2. **Power:** omnipotence (1Chr 29:11-12).
3. **Riches:** unconditional riches in all realms including the spiritual befitting an all-sufficient God (2Cor 8:9; Eph 3:8).
4. **Wisdom:** attribute of God that demonstrates itself in the conscious and purposeful creation and government of the world, appointing limits and goals in the execution of His will and the moulding of the destiny (1Cor 1:24, 30).

5. **Strength**: the ability of the Lord whether he actively exerted or not (Lk 11:22; Eph 6:10; 2 Thes 1:9).
6. **Honour**: due to His sacrificial death (Heb 2:9; Phil 2:11).
7. **Glory**: higher than honour, indicating the divine and heavenly radiance, the loftiness and majesty.
8. **Blessing**: or praise is that quality of Christ, which evokes mans thankful response for the benefits, received.

Revelation 5:13

And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"

1. **Throne and Lamb**: received the praise of the whole creation.
2. **Creature**: Implied is that every intelligent animated creation (Ps 146:6, 2Per 2:4; Jude 6; Phil 2:9-11). Note it is anticipatory.

Revelation 5:14

Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

1. **Amen:** the closing of the doxology, which the four started and 24 elder terminated it.

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