

Detailed Study of Revelation Chapter 5

Introduction to Revelation Chapter 5

Revelation Chapter 5 plays a pivotal role in the overall structure and message of the Book of Revelation. It provides an essential transition from the judgment scene of Chapter 4 (the vision of God on His throne) into the series of judgments that will unfold throughout the rest of the book. This chapter focuses on the enthronement of the Lamb (Jesus Christ) and His role as the worthy One to execute God's will, thus setting the stage for the seals, trumpets, and bowls of judgment.

The main events of this chapter include the presentation of a scroll with seven seals, a search for someone worthy to open it, the appearance of the Lamb who is worthy, and the heavenly worship that follows. The theological significance of this chapter centers on the Lamb's authority, worthiness, and redemptive work. For dispensationalists, this chapter has implications for understanding the timeline of God's plan for humanity and the role of Christ in the unfolding events of the end times.

1. Exegetical Breakdown of Revelation 5:1-14

Verses 1-4: The Sealed Scroll

Revelation 5:1-4 (ESV):

"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. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?' And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it."

- **Greek Word Study:**
 - **"Sealed" (Greek: *sphragizo*)** – The verb *sphragizo* means to mark or seal something as a sign of ownership or to guarantee that something is sealed off. In the ancient world, sealed documents, especially those with multiple seals, were of immense legal importance. It represents God's unalterable plan for the world.
 - **"Worthy" (Greek: *axios*)** – The term *axios* refers to something being "fit" or "deserving" of a particular honor. In this context, it emphasizes the criteria necessary to open the scroll and execute the judgments contained within it.
- **Historical and Cultural Context:**

The scroll represents the redemptive plan of God and likely has connections to Jewish eschatological concepts of a sealed book or scroll that contains God's judgment or plan for the future (e.g., *Daniel 12:4, 9*). The fact that no one is found worthy to open it heightens the tension in the narrative, showing the unique and impossible nature of the task.

- **Theological Insight:**

The scroll is the legal document that contains God's final decrees concerning judgment and redemption. The search for someone worthy to open it reflects the absence of any human being capable of bringing about God's final purposes, highlighting the unique qualification of Jesus Christ.

Verses 5-7: The Appearance of the Lamb

Revelation 5:5-7 (ESV):

"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.' 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. And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne."

- **Greek Word Study:**

- **"Lion" (Greek: *leon*)** – Refers to a powerful, victorious, and royal animal. This reference to the Lion of Judah is a messianic title that connects to the prophecy in Genesis 49:9-10, where the Messiah is described as a lion from the tribe of Judah.
- **"Lamb" (Greek: *arnion*)** – The Lamb in Revelation is a symbol of Christ, specifically in His role as the sacrificial offering for sin. The Greek *arnion* conveys the image of innocence and sacrifice. It is used uniquely in Revelation to emphasize Christ's redemptive work on the cross.
- **"Seven horns"** – Symbolizes completeness and divine power. Horns in the Bible often represent strength and power (e.g., *Psalms 89:17*), and the number seven indicates perfection.
- **"Seven eyes"** – The seven eyes are symbolic of God's perfect omniscience, as the "seven spirits" of God sent out into all the earth represent the fullness of the Holy Spirit's work.

- **Theological Insight:** The image of the Lion of Judah and the Lamb that was slain contrasts power with humility. This duality encapsulates the nature of Christ's mission: victorious in His sovereignty as the Lion, yet sacrificial in His role as the Lamb.
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Verses 8-10: The Worship of the Lamb

Revelation 5:8-10 (ESV):

"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. 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, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.'"

- **Greek Word Study:**

- **"Ransomed" (Greek: *lutron*)** – The verb *lutron* means to buy back or redeem. It emphasizes the idea of Christ paying the price for humanity's sin. This is theologically significant because it indicates the cost of salvation, accomplished through Christ's sacrifice.
- **"Kingdom and priests" (Greek: *basileion kai hierais*)** – This phrase alludes to the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel in the Old Testament, where the nation was to be a "kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:6). Now, it is fulfilled in Christ's work, making believers part of a royal priesthood.

- **Cultural and Historical Context:**

The imagery of incense and the golden bowls ties into the temple worship of the Old Testament, where incense was used as a symbol of the prayers of the saints ascending to God (e.g., *Psalms 141:2*). This helps to emphasize the ongoing intercession of Christ on behalf of believers.

Verses 11-14: The Heavenly Worship and Praise

Revelation 5:11-14 (ESV):

"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, 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!' 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!' And the four living creatures said, 'Amen!' and the elders fell down and worshiped."

- **Theological Insight:**

This universal worship emphasizes the cosmic scope of Christ's victory. The Lamb is worthy of praise, not only from humans but from all of creation. This highlights the ultimate supremacy of Christ as the central figure in God's redemptive plan.

- **Hermeneutical Perspective (Dispensational View):**

In dispensational theology, the scene in Revelation 5 is seen as a picture of Christ's preparation to take control of human history. The Lamb's taking of the scroll signifies His readiness to open the seals and initiate the end-time events. Dispensationalists would interpret this as occurring before the Tribulation period.

2. Key Questions for Application for Today's Christian Audience

1. **Who is truly worthy of our worship?**

In a world filled with distractions and idols, Revelation 5 reminds us that only Jesus Christ is worthy of our worship. How can we reflect this truth in our daily lives?

2. **Do we understand the gravity of Christ's sacrifice?**

The Lamb is praised for His sacrificial work. Do we live in light of His redemptive act, and do we recognize its cost?

3. **What role do we play in God's redemptive plan?**

The believers are described as a kingdom and priests. How are we serving God as His representatives in this world? Are we fulfilling our priestly duties in interceding for others?

4. **How do we handle the tension between suffering and victory?**

The Lamb is slain, yet victorious. How does this paradox speak to our own experiences of suffering and the hope of ultimate victory in Christ?

Conclusion

Revelation 5 is a powerful and deeply theological chapter that bridges the throne room vision of God with the unfolding events of God's judgment on the earth. Christ, the Lamb who was slain, is the only one worthy to open the seals and execute God's plan. This chapter presents a cosmic vision of worship and a call to recognize Christ's central role in God's eternal purposes. For the contemporary Christian, it offers profound theological insights into the worthiness of Christ and challenges us to live in light of His sacrifice and victory.