

Revelation 5:1-7

"The Lion And The Lamb"

Ch's 4-5 are a heavenly happening. Ch 4 is the opening scene in which we're introduced in dramatic fashion to the centerpiece of heaven, a Throne, an occupied throne from which God rules & reigns sovereignly in all power & w/all authority. But the reason we get to see Ch 4 is because John wants to take us to Ch 5 whereby the primary point of these 2 Ch's begin to unfold & come into focus. **His desire is to fixate our eyes on a scroll; a very important scroll, in fact we might say that it's a critical scroll; so critical in fact that not just anyone can open it, or read it, you have to meet a certain set of criteria, have a certain set of credentials or qualifying characteristics to apprehend this scroll & look upon it's contents.**

So the whole reason we've been caught up to this heavenly happening is leading up to this scroll, showing *to* us & sharing *w/us* the One found worthy to take the scroll and to loose it's seals. So even though there's a break in our bible from Ch 4 to Ch 5 there's no break in the scene that John is seeing *w/his* eyes.

If you recall he's been witnessing a contagious kind of worship as the 4 living creatures, full of eyes both in front & in back, around and from *w/in* their 6 wings having the clearest vision, the greatest insight & understanding as to who God is above and beyond any and all other created beings live their existence to worship God & bring Him praise. From which we're able to deduct that all failure to truly worship God & give God glory is rooted in an inability to truly "see" Him for who He is. We don't understand His love *for* us, the purchase price of redemption that He has paid on behalf *of* us; therefore we restrain our hearts from worshiping Him freely; from glorifying Him openly. Not so in this heavenly scene.

They refuse to rest day or night, but cry out saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was & is & is to come!" There's such purity, such passion, such a longing to exalt the Lord that the elders respond *to that*, they refuse to sit by and watch the cherubim worship *w/out* getting in *on that* themselves. They cast their crowns before the throne & fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever & ever saying: "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory & honor and power; for You created all things, & by Your will they exist & were created." Ch5...

Vs 1-3

So we note the transition from Ch 4 to Ch 5 taking our focus *from* the throne and placing it *on* this scroll that is in (or more literally upon) the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

It's not as though God is clenching this scroll in His fist saying, "Who can come and take it from Me?" No, it's as though His hand (figuratively speaking [God is Spirit]) is outstretched w/this scroll resting upon it awaiting anyone worthy to come and apprehend it so as to look upon it.

Now the question comes up, "What is this scroll and what is its relevance?" Well, we know that its *relevance* is significant because as the seals are broken (Ch 6) it impacts all humanity who dwell upon the earth in dramatic fashion. As for exactly what it represents I will tell you once again w/resounding clarity & complete authority, *no one knows...* Oh, you can get out your shaking stick again w/regard to all the conjecture and see if there's more there than you can shake it at but there's a lot & I'm not sure why. There's something in man that wants to know the unknowable; & certainly we want to do our due diligence so as to study and see if there are clues that might help us gain a better grip on things.

But let me tell you a little secret that I've come to discover about the Word of God. If there is something that's absolutely critical for you and me to know; it will tell us 😊!

For instance there are a few things that we do learn about this scroll. #1 God Himself hangs on to it. Whatever is on it is so important, so significant that it's in God's personal possession. #2 It's written on both the inside and out (which is a very rare thing because the outside of a scroll was very difficult to write upon) which tells us that whatever it is it's complete, nothing more can be added to it, it's filled up, it's final. Finally #3 It's sealed w/7 seals meaning what? It's completely sealed (#7 speaks of completion).

Now as I said the guess work revolving around this scroll is extensive. Some see it as the O.T. & N.T., some see it as the book of Rev, some believe it's God's certificate of divorce to Israel (that's right, some people actually believe that). Of course those who believe that primarily consist of those who are into "replacement theology" thinking that God is finished w/Israel & the church has become the Israel of God, however that's not what the bible teaches at all. As a matter of fact the primary people God will be working through and using throughout the 7 yr period of Great Tribulation as found in the book of Revelation is the nation of Israel, it's the 70th week of Daniel, the time of Jacob's trouble. God will restore and reconcile Israel unto Himself; He has not cast them off forever...

But so far all of those things point *back* when we know Ch 4 forward point to the *future*. Not to mention that you don't have to be high & holy, or a model of sinless purity to handle the scriptures, or the book of Revelation, we're all doing that right now. Who would be unworthy to lay hold of a divorce certificate? Those things just don't make much sense to me...

There are 2 theories that make more sense to me than any other & to be honest I'm torn between the 2. 1 being that it's the title deed to the earth. Adam having been given dominion over the earth but forfeiting that dominion in the fall; and who is worthy to redeem the earth; to regain the rights to rule the earth. *If it were lost through sin, you'd have to be sinless to redeem it. That rules out any & everyone who's ever lived, minus One...* There's attractive appeal to this opinion and to be honest there's several areas of scripture that can be used to create a case for that position. The problem of course is that it can't be created conclusively & title deeds (that we're aware of) though sealed were never sealed w/7 seals.

Not to mention when did God ever really lose title deed to the earth? We know that He gave Adam dominion over the earth & that Adam lost that, but as for the earth itself the bible declares, *"The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein."*¹ *So though the bible is clear that Satan presently has dominion in the sense of government; he's the god of this age, the prince of the power of the air & all of that. The earth is the Lord's, He is sovereign, He's in control.*

What *was* sealed w/7 seals back in John's day were last will & testaments. Under Roman law the 7 witnesses to a will would seal it, they would tie 7 strings around it & where each knot was tied they would drip a blob of wax and each witness would press their signet ring into the wax creating the seal. *Such was the case w/the wills of both Caesar Augustus and Emperor Vespian for their successors & obviously in order to open those seals and exact that person's will you would have to be a qualified individual.*

Of course for the will to go into effect the one who's will it was would have to die... So it's plausible that this scroll is God's will; that is, His final settlement of the affairs of this His universe specifically as it pertains to the way human history will wind down & wrap up. Commentator John Walvoord says, "The seven sealed book therefore is the comprehensive program of God culminating in the second coming of Christ." *The idea being that God has a book/scroll in which human history has been written out & sealed in advance, the scroll is filled up, it's final. And who but God would be worthy to take this scroll, loose its seals and initiate the will of God upon the creation of God making for the consummation of human history?*

As you can see a lot of people have put in a lot of thought pertaining to this scroll.

¹ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Ps 24:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Yet for all of that the emphasis isn't really upon the content of the scroll or even upon the scroll itself. As important as the scroll is, the emphasis is placed on the seals upon the scroll & even more so upon the One who is found, not *willing* but *worthy* to take it and *loose* it's seals.

So we find in Vs 2 a strong angel, one who's voice is able to reach to the far throws *of* all creation & he issues a challenge *to* all creation. "Who is worthy to open the scrolls & to loose it's seals?" It's not a question of being willing, it's a question of being *worthy*... This word "worthy" here is an interesting word, perhaps you remember a few weeks ago we had a local Christian band here "Axios"? This is the Greek word "Axios" it's actually a commercial term relating to a pair of scales. It came to mean, "that which corresponds to" or "the equivalent of", "bringing equilibrium to". Something is put on one side of the scales & that which is on the other is equal, or in this case something is on one side of the *seals* & the angel is calling out for one equal to the task at hand.

Now if it's the title deed he's calling for one worthy to redeem the earth & all that's contained therein. We know according to Romans Ch 8 that the whole of creation groans and labors w/birth pangs longing for redemption, reconciliation & restoration to God as He created it to be. If it be God's will the cry is for the one equal to the task of consummation; of bringing to completion God's plan for human history. You have to be *above* creation in order to exact God's will *upon* creation.

Regardless the challenge is to the whole of creation; "Who is equal to the task at hand as it pertains to opening the scroll & loosing it's seals?"

Vs 3

4 Words in this Vs that are critical to you & me, "No one...was able". None were found who were qualified, there were none who met the criteria nor had the credentials. No one was equal to the task of opening the scroll or to look at it, in all of creation. Be they in heaven, on the earth, or under the earth. The idea being that the invitation went out to all of creation and no one was found worthy.

Abe didn't stand up, Moses didn't stand up, Samuel didn't stand up, J.B. of whom Jesus said was the greatest man to ever live... didn't stand up. Paul the apostle didn't come forward, Mary didn't move to the front... **No one** was found worthy...

Now when it says that that no one was able to look at it, that doesn't mean that it was such a holy document that glory was radiating from it therefore no one could look upon it.

It means that before you can read it you have to loose the seals, & since no one could take the scroll & loose it's seals than neither could anyone look at it (that is read it).

Creation is in a place whereby it cannot help itself...now this is bad news, & that's how John received it, because if there's none worthy of the task at hand we're all sunk.

Vs 4

Where it says that he "wept much" the idea is that he was sobbing convulsively because at this point humanity is left w/out hope. There are none equal to the task, able to initiate God's plan, bring closure to the curse, wind things down, wrap things up, bring to pass what's written on the scroll...

Vs 5-7

Wow... this is one of those scenes that you just have to sit & soak up for a minute and even at that you're not sure that you got it all. There's a lot going on here that we want to take a few minutes to consider.

The 1st thing that rises to my attention is that this elder (remember them, we met them in Ch 4 [the 24 guys on 24 lesser thrones around the throne of God who cast down their crowns before God on the cue of the 4 living creatures who worship God day & night]) he sees John weeping, comes to him, encourages him & points him to Jesus...Good for him.

Let's face there was a pretty involved scene here. Cherubim were leading praises, a mighty angel is making a proclamation, one of the elders look over noticed a "first time visitor" who had a need, he was hurting, he was heaving, weeping & sobbing & this elder sets his business aside to come over & minister to John...good for him.

I'm sure you're sensing the application... you & me, we need to be cultivating a greater sense of awareness to the needs that may be around us. How many people come & go (even from our fellowship) & there's no point of contact simply because we're not paying attention. We're to caught up in the happening of the moment; it's nothing personal, we're not trying to *avoid* people, we're just not proactive in *reaching out* to people.

John was down, this guy saw that, went to him & ministered proper perspective to Him, readjusted his vision. He said, "Hey, don't weep, fix your eyes upon Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David has prevailed to open the scroll & to loose it's seals."

Of course by using those phrases we know he was pointing him to Jesus. Jesus is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root & offspring of David.

When he calls Jesus the Lion of the tribe of Judah it's a reference to Genesis 49:8-10 when Jacob prophetically gave the scepter to Judah designating him as the tribe kings would come from. He said, *"Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father's children shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people."*² Jesus is the Lion of the tribe of Judah; Shiloh, Messiah; the King of kings.

The Root of David. Not only did Jesus come from David's line physically, but as Deity He's the One Who brought David's line into existence. He is both the Root & the Offspring of David, his Lord & his Son (Matt 22:41-46).

"He has prevailed" the elder says to John. He has overcome, He has won, He's achieved victory. Let it soak in, "Our Lord has *prevailed*..." He descended from heaven to earth in humiliation becoming God in human flesh, He overcame all the trials & temptations associated w/the flesh, the agonies of the Garden of Gethsemane, the shame of the cross of Calvary. **He achieved victory over sin & death; He prevailed & rose from the grave. Having descended to the lower parts of the earth He led captivity captive ascending on High leading those who throughout the centuries had awaited God's Redeemer & He has prevailed to open the scroll & to loose it's seals!**

John turns, & there He is...but he doesn't see a Lion...he sees...a Lamb? Yeah, a Lamb as though it had been slain, standing there in the midst of the elders and of the 4 living creatures & of the throne of God.

The Lion conquered but not by His strength (as it were) but rather through His sacrifice, it wouldn't be *brute strength* that would achieve victory but *blood-shed* His own blood, shed for you & me. John expected to see a Lion, but what he saw was a Lamb, not even a beefy, manly kind of Lamb. The word for "lamb" here is the diminutive form, it means "Little Lamb"; think about that...

When the kingdoms of man choose an emblem of representation they choose ferocious beasts or birds of prey. Think of your favorite football team... I mean they use names like, "The bears, the Ravens, Jaguars, Panthers". How many of you would follow a football team called, "The little lambs"? "Hey, save that stuff for the nursery", right?

² The New King James Version. 1982 (Ge 49:8-10), Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The kingdoms of men like to be represented by ferocity & aggression. Not so the kingdom of God, the kingdom of God is represented by humility, gentleness & sacrificial love... One time in the book of Rev is Jesus referred to as a "Lion", but you'll hear of the Lamb nearly 30x's...

There's some important things to note about this Lamb; 1st of all it bore the marks of sacrifice, "as though it had been slain" we could understand it, "as though it had been cut in the throat for a sacrifice" the portrait is a very clear one & that is this: Jesus wasn't merely killed, He was offered as a sacrifice. He is as J.B. declared the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." His death & resurrection testifies to the fact that He is worthy to be the heir of all creation, to administer the will of the Living God, to be the Redeemer of all who would place their trust, their faith in Him.

You see it's true that a storm is brewing in Heaven, that judgment is preparing to be poured out (as we'll see beginning in Ch 6). However that judgment is dictated & administered by the Lamb who already offered as escape from that judgment by taking God's judgment upon Himself. So judgment comes upon a world that hates the Lamb, that has rejected the Lamb & His offer of escape.

There He is before the throne as though He had been slain, the marks of sacrifice fresh before the throne, the sacrifice of Christ doesn't grow stale in the sight of God; it's ever present, relevant & fresh before God's throne; eternally effectual. Yet we note that the emphasis isn't upon the death of Christ so much as it is upon the *resurrection* of Christ, He's *standing* before the throne, very much alive...

He's the Lion & the Lamb, we can't separate suffering & glory, the crown & the cross; & the righteous Judge & the willing sacrifice.

John notes 7 horns & 7 eyes; not difficult to discern what this speaks of. The # 7 as we've noted speaks of completion; horns in scripture are always indicative of power & strength. When you watch a wildlife program & a couple males are competing for the alpha position, they lock horns. You've heard the phrase, "You mess w/the bull, you get the horns". What we're seeing here is that the Lamb of God has all strength, all power. 7 eyes, eyes speaking of insight, knowledge, wisdom; the Lamb of God is all powerful, all knowing; omniscient & omnipotent. His conduit of strength & knowledge? The Holy Spirit, He moves in the fullness of the Spirit, who is the Spirit of wisdom, of understanding & of power.

So though the Lamb bears the marks of sacrifice we're not to pity Him, we're to praise Him. He's all powerful, all knowing, moves in the fullness of the power of the Holy Spirit & willingly laid down His life for you & me.

He is the way the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Him. He alone is worthy to take the scroll out of the right hand of the Father & to loose it's seals.

& That's what He does & I want you to see what happens next... when we gather next time to finish Rev Ch 5 ☺.

Prayer Points:

Lord Jesus our hearts well up w/praise as we think about Your redemptive work upon the cross. You are the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Yet You are the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. You were led as a lamb to the slaughter & as a sheep before it's shearers is silent so You opened not Your mouth.

Yet You were bruised for us, You bled for us, you bore our iniquity and have cleansed us of all our sin. Surely You are worthy to take the scroll & to loose its seals; for You were slain & have redeemed us to God by Your blood. We love You, we thank You for Your word...

Jesus has made a way where there is no way, creation cannot help itself, there are none who can stand in the gap for you outside of Christ for all sin & fall short of the glory of God. Yet Jesus has clothed Himself in humanity, lived life sinnlessly & laid down His life willingly for you & me upon the cross. If you need Jesus to make you brand new, you're hearing Him knock upon the door of your heart & today you're ready to open it for the very 1st time, then come to Jesus just as you are & you'll never be the same again, you'll be a new creation Christ, forgiven & clean.