

Love Community Baptist Church

Wednesday Night Virtual Bible Study

Dr. Michael O. Oyedokun II, Senior Pastor/Founder
pastor@lovecommunitybc.org
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Revelation – Chapter 5

THE LION, THE LAMB AND THE SCROLL

The focus of Revelation 4 was the throne. Here, John begins with reference to the throne, but now shifted his focus to the scroll held by the enthroned Lord.

SCROLL

- Written on the inside and the back.
- Sealed with seven seals.

When a roll was finished, it was fastened with strings and the strings were sealed with wax at the knots. This scroll was sealed with seven seals; there were seven strings around the scroll, each string sealed with wax.

- These were not seven writings each separated by a seal; but seven seals all set upon one scroll. All the seals must be opened before the scroll could be read.
- It's important to remember that whatever was on this scroll, no one except Jesus was (and is) worthy to open it (Revelation 5:3-4).
- The best solution is to see the scroll as "God's will, his final settlement of the affairs of the universe." (Barclay) This is based on the idea that customarily, under Roman law, wills were sealed with seven seals, each from a witness to the validity of the will.

(Revelation 5:2-4) Who is worthy to open the scroll?

Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.

We don't know who this angel is. Many have suggested that it is Gabriel, but we don't know. Nonetheless, this angel issued a challenge to all creation: Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals? This is a challenge no creature can answer because no creature is worthy to open this particular scroll.

John wept either because a previous promise to see the future may now be denied (Revelation 4:1), or more likely, because the consummation of history would now indefinitely postponed.

(Revelation 5:5-7) The Lion of the tribe of Judah is worthy to open the scroll.

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

One of the elders (not an angel) rescued John from his grief, showing him the one who has prevailed to open the scroll. This One was the great figure of Old Testament prophecy: the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, Messiah of Israel and of the Gentiles.

- The Messianic title Lion of the tribe of Judah comes from Genesis 49:9-10, Isaiah 31:4, and Hosea 11:10. The title Root of David comes from Isaiah 11:10 and is repeated in Revelation 22:16.

Because of the elder's announcement, John expected to see a Lion, but saw a Lamb instead. John even used the specific word for a little lamb; he "Signifies a little or delicate lamb." (Clarke)

- The Lamb is presented in a way both sympathetic and powerful; He is living (stood a Lamb), but He still had the marks of previous sacrifice upon Him (as though it had been slain).

It's hard to describe what John saw, but this Lamb had the marks of sacrifice on it. The coming judgment beginning in chapter six is dictated and administrated by the Lamb who already offered an escape from judgment by taking judgment upon Himself. The judgment will come upon a world that hates the Lamb and all He stands for, and rejects His offer of escape.

Having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth: Even though the marks of His sacrifice were evident, the Lamb was not presented as an object of pity. He also bore the marks of omnipotence (seven horns) and omniscience (seven eyes). What a figure! A slain Lamb, who has the marks of omniscience and omnipotence!

No created being was found worthy to take the scroll, but the Lamb can take it. His rank, character and ability to take the scroll and open it (and thus dictate the destiny of creation) has been permanently demonstrated by His work on the cross.

(Revelation 5:8-10) The song of the elders and the cherubim.

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

When the Lamb had taken the scroll of God's judgment into His own hand, "the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people" (verse 8). Revelation is the most symbolic book in the Bible, and in this passage **the "prayers of the saints" are symbolized as golden bowls of incense**, held by twenty-four elders. Of course, the more symbolic something is, the more its interpretations can vary, but it's important to understand what these prayers of the saints are—and what they are not.

God established incense as a part of the sacerdotal system (and therefore as symbolism) in Exodus 30:1–10 when Moses was told to build the altar of incense. The prayers of the saints in Revelation 5:8,

especially as represented by incense in the context of temple imagery, should be understood to take the role of incense in the temple, which was to offer up a sweet aroma to God and to symbolize prayer. The prayers of the righteous are pleasing to Him. Psalm 141:2 describes this aspect of prayer perfectly: “May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice” (Psalm 141:2).

The fact that these are prayers “of the saints” in Revelation 5:8 indicates that God hears the prayers of His people.

In Revelation 5, God’s plan is near to being accomplished. The judgment of the wicked world is about to commence, and the ultimate redemption of God’s people is about to be realized. The living creatures and elders sing a hymn of praise to the Lamb: “With your blood you purchased for God / persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. / You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, / and they will reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:9–10). The golden vessels full of incense are proffered to God, whose word will stand, whose will is accomplished, and who will pronounce the final “Amen!” to the prayers of the saints.

(Revelation 5:11-12) Countless angels join in, declaring the worthiness of the Lamb because of the redemption He accomplished.

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, 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!”*

The angels and the elders fell down before the Lamb together (Revelation 5:8). Yet it seems that only the elders sang the song of the redeemed (Revelation 5:9-10), because in no place does the Bible tell us of the redemption of angels. Then, the voice of many angels around the throne rose up with the praise of the Great Redeemer.

- In Revelation 4:9-10, the angels prompted the elders into worship. Here, the elders seem to prompt the angels. It is a wonderful cycle in heaven, with the angels and elders encouraging each other to more and more praise.

(Revelation 5:13-14) All creation praises the Father and the Lamb.

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!”*

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

The ancient Greek word for worshipped is literally “to prostrate” or “to lay before another in complete submission.” The scene may be that the elders fell down to their knees, then laid themselves before Him who lives forever and ever as an expression of their total submission and worship.

- “This is the eastern method of adoration: first, the person worshipping fell down on his knees; and then, bowing down touched the earth with his forehead. This latter act was prostration.” (Clarke)

Forever and ever... worshipped Him who lives forever and ever: The living God reigns eternally. The Caesars come and go, including those who persecute God's people. But the Lord God lives forever and ever and is ever worthy of our praise.