

# Ministry of Grace

## Revelation Chapter 5

<sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" <sup>3</sup>And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, <sup>4</sup>and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. <sup>5</sup>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." <sup>6</sup>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. <sup>7</sup>And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. <sup>8</sup>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. <sup>9</sup>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, <sup>10</sup>and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." <sup>11</sup>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, <sup>12</sup>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!" <sup>13</sup>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!" <sup>14</sup>And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped. [ESV]

## Notes

### Revelation 5:1

**<sup>1</sup>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.**

“**scroll**” – This the Greek word *biblios*. In John’s time most writing was done on a paper-like material called papyrus. It was made from the papyrus plant, a long reed-type plant, by stripping off the tough outer husk and cutting the inner “pith” into thin strips. These strips were then laid side-by-side, then overlaid with additional strips laid perpendicular to the first strips. This was then pressed or hammered together until the sticky pith formed an even, flat sheet which was then set out to dry in the sun. Long sections of this material were then joined together and rolled into a scroll. The scroll was referred to as a *biblios*.

“**written within and on the back**” – This kind of contract was known all over the Middle East in ancient times and was used by the Romans from the time of Nero on. The full contract was written on the inner pages and sealed with seven seals. The content was then described briefly on the outside. All kinds of transactions were consummated this way, including marriage-contracts, rental and lease agreements, release of slaves, contract-bills, and bonds..

“**sealed**” – Greek *katesphragidzō* consisting of *kata*, an intensifier and a form of *sphragidzo*, meaning “to seal.” Hence, it means to “completely seal” or to “greatly seal.” This word is in the perfect tense implying past action with an ongoing state of being with the emphasis on the ongoing state of being. In other words, this is a scroll that has been sealed in the past with the effect being that it is now completely sealed.

This scroll was rolled tightly and sealed with seven seals. The most common form of document sealing was with a waxy substance that was imprinted with a “signet” identifying the one who authorized the document. This form of sealing is what we get our English word “signature” from. The more important a document was, the more seals that were applied. Title deeds and other documents of ownership were often sealed with seven seals. There is an example of a real estate transaction documented in this way in **Jeremiah 32:10-15**.

“The scroll is most likely the title deed to the earth. Two considerations lead to this conclusion. In the first place, the call having gone forth for an applicant to come and take the scroll, John wept because no man was found worthy to do so. The sphere of man is evidently in view. Furthermore, when the seals on the scroll are eventually broken, disasters overtake the earth. The right to rule the earth is now to be decided at the throne of God, once and for all.” [John Phillips]

### Revelation 5:2, 3

**<sup>2</sup>And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" <sup>3</sup>And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it,**

“**strong**” – Greek *ischuron* from *ischuo* meaning “strength, ability, and power, both physical and moral.”

“**proclaiming**” – Not just saying but proclaiming like one making an announcement to all those present.

“**worthy**” – Greek *axios* also from *ischuo*. The word *axios* means one who has the ability both physically and morally to do something.

“**no one**” – Greek *oudeis*, which literally means “not even one.”

“**to look into it**” – Greek *blepō*, which refers to the physical act of seeing, but it also means “to perceive with the eyes and discern, or understand.”

### **Revelation 5:4, 5**

**<sup>4</sup>and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. <sup>5</sup>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."**

“**wept**” – Greek *klaio* meaning “to weep, wail, or lament, implying not only the shedding of tears, but also every external expression of grief.”

“**Lion of the tribe of Judah**” is a reference to Jacob’s blessing of Judah when he blessed all his children just before his death.

"Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. (**Genesis 49:8-10**) [ESV]

“**the Root of David**” – Jesus is not only the offspring of David, he is the source from which David (and all of mankind) came. “**Root**” is the Greek word *rhidza* (from which we get the term rhizome, a type of root) meaning “the root of a plant.” Metonymically, it is used to refer to a branch or offshoot but the clear basic meaning is the root. Christ, Himself, claimed to be both the root and the descendant of David:

I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star. (**Revelation 22:16**) [ESV]

“**has conquered**” – This is the same Greek verb, *nikao*, used to describe the “conquerors” or “overcomers” in each of the letters to the seven churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. The tense of the verb in the current verse is aorist, active, indicative, indicating past action completed at a single point of time. This is most likely a reference to the death and resurrection when Christ offered himself as the Lamb of God as a payment for sins and then overcame death proving himself as the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God! Because of this He is worthy (able physically and morally) “so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals”

This same word, *nikao*, is translated “triumphing over” in Paul’s letter to the Colossians:

by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by **triumphing over them** in him. (**Colossians 2:14, 15**) [ESV]

### **Revelation 5:6, 7**

**6**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. **7**And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.

“**Lamb**” – There are several words that we want to look at.

- *probaton* = a sheep
- *aren* = a lamb or a young sheep
- *amnos* = a sacrificial lamb
- *arnion* = the diminutive of *aren*, meaning a little lamb or a small lamb.

The word translated “**Lamb**” in the current verse is *arnion*, hence it is “a little lambkin.” John looked up expecting to see a powerful, ferocious lion and, instead, saw a little lamb, like one that has been slaughtered or slain, standing (which a slain animal cannot do.)

See **Exodus 12:1-27** for a description and instructions regarding the lamb that was to be slain to protect the Israelites from the death angel on the night of the first Passover.

Revelation is the book of “the little Lamb.” The word “**Lamb**” only occurs twice in the Old Testament in reference to the Messiah (**Isaiah 53:7** and **Jeremiah 11:19**) and only 4 times (as a form of *amnos* – a sacrificial lamb) in the New Testament outside the book of Revelation (**John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32; I Peter 1:19**) and it appears twice in the plural (as a form of *arnion*) in the New Testament outside the book of Revelation (**Luke 10:3 & John 21:15**) but it appears 28 times in Revelation, all of which are a translation of the Greek word *arnion*, “a little lambkin.”

Against Satan, the great dragon (**Revelation 12:9**) and the powerful, world ruling beast (**Revelation 13:1-3**), God used the “little Lamb” to conquered all. This may give new meaning to the verses,

But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. (**1Corinthians 1:27-29**) [ESV]

Finally, as we study the book of Revelation, notice how many times Satan and the beast are depicted as large, menacing, and ferocious. Yet, they are conquered by “a little lamb.”

“**seven horns**” – The horn is a symbol of an animal’s power and seven is the number of completeness or perfection. Therefore, the seven horns are seen as a reference to His omnipotence (total power).

“**seven eyes**” – This is a reference to the total vision (knowledge) of the Lamb and revealed in this verse to represent the “seven Spirits of God” or the “seven-fold Spirit of God” (see notes on **Revelation 3:1**). Therefore, it is a reference to God’s omniscience (total knowledge).

Daniel had a similar vision of this event where all dominion is given to the Messiah

I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. **(Daniel 7:13, 14)** [ESV]

### **Revelation 5:8**

**<sup>8</sup>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.**

“**harp, and golden bowls**” – The grammatical structure of the Greek text seems to indicate that it was only the elders, not the living creatures, who held these two items.

“**golden bowls full of incense**” – These bowls were associated with the tabernacle and the temple where they were connected with the altar. They symbolize the intercessory work of the priests for the people. The burning of incense is associated with the prayers of the saints throughout the Bible (**Psalms 141:2; Luke 1:9,10; Revelation 8:3,4**)

### **Revelation 5:9,10**

**<sup>9</sup>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, <sup>10</sup>and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."**

The reaction (of the living ones and the 24 elders) to the Lamb having taken the scroll is to bow down in worship proclaiming that He is worthy (remember in verse 2, “who is worthy?”)

“**they sang**” – Throughout the Bible, with the possible exception of **Job 38:7**, it is nowhere recorded that the angels sing. Every place in the New Testament where the action of angels is recorded as singing (such as **Luke 2:13**), it is translated from the Greek verb *legō*, meaning “to say or to speak.”

Even in the Job verse noted above, the Hebrew word is *rānan*, meaning “to shout for joy; to sing joyfully. It indicates the utterance or crying-out of a person or persons. The character of the cry must be discerned by the context or actual intended use of the verb: Often it indicates crying out in joy or exaltation.” [The Complete Word Study Dictionary] Therefore, it is best to see only the elders as singing here.

### **Revelation 5:11, 12**

**<sup>11</sup>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, <sup>12</sup>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!"**

“**around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders**” – The word “around” is again from the word *kuklos*, meaning “to encircle.” Thus, in this scene we have the Trinity in the middle,

the four living ones encircling the throne, the twenty-four elders encircling them, and the angels encircling them.

“**the living creatures**” – These are the “living ones” that we saw in the previous chapter. According to the Jews, these four are Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael. However, as we will see in chapter 8 Gabriel is probably one of the seven “presence” angels.

“**myriads of myriads**” -- The Greek word *urias* (written in the plural), transliterated “myriad” is the largest number in the Greek language, representing 10,000. Literally translated, therefore, this number is 10,000s of 10,000s. If the number was to have been 100,000,000 (ten thousand times ten thousand) the word *urias* would have been written in the singular (a myriad-myriad), but here *urias* is written in the plural each time, which is the Greek way of indicating a very large number which cannot be counted.

“**thousands of thousands**” – The word translated “thousands” is almost always used with mankind in the book of Revelation. Again, it is used each time in the plural.

“**saying with a loud voice**” – Notice that they are not “singing” but “saying” and it was with a loud voice. Literally, this is “with a great sound.”

“**power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing**” – The seven attributes denoting the worthiness of God to receive all praise.

### **Revelation 5:13, 14**

**<sup>13</sup>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!" <sup>14</sup>And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.**

“**Might**” – This is the word *kratos* (active power) instead of *ischus* (reserve of strength) as used in the previous verse.

“**Amen!**” – As a finale to the universal celebration of praise to God, the four living ones proclaim Amen! (It is truth.)

“**twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped**” – In response to the singing of praise and worship by all of creation, those redeemed by the Lamb fall down in worship.

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