

Revelation 5:1-7  
 The Scroll and the Lamb  
 Study 19

Please open your Bibles to the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Revelation.

- We pick thing up in the middle of a scene where in John – the last living apostle –
  - Has been brought into heaven
    - and into the presence of God Himself
- By way of reminder, John had been physically on the Island of Patmos –
  - Where he had been imprisoned by Domitian in the early 90's AD
    - It's from there that he was brought into the presence of the risen Jesus
      - And there, given 7 messages from Jesus to relay to 7 churches in Asia minor
        - That's where John has been throughout chapters 2 and 3
- Chapter 4 opens up with a sight and a sound
  - When John is finished with the 7 letters, he looks up and sees a door standing open in heaven
    - And hears the sound of a voice – like a trumpet – saying:
      - “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this!”
        - The bible tells us that immediately he “became in spirit”
          - And was caught up - ‘translated’ - into the very throne room of God

And it's there that He is given an exclusive and extraordinary first-hand view of God Himself

- Seeing, first-hand, what would most certainly be impossible to describe
  - If it were not for the illumination of the Holy Spirit of God
- To see for the first time and try to describe God's throne...
  - To describe God's presence
    - To describe God's Glory....
      - To describe the beautiful visual splendor radiating from around God's throne...
        - Words almost seem insufficient
- And so John, almost seemingly grasping for what his earthly memory could seize

- Tries to explain a God whose glory and appearance John can only describe like a jasper and a sardius stone
  - Tries to explain a holy throne fit only for the Almighty with a halo of emerald color encompassing it
    - How would one illustrate such an awesome sight
      - Without the feeling of defeat having only human language to articulate?

And as if God's presence was not enough to fill every sense of the man

- The throne room has more to drink in.
  - Like a small child drinking from a summer hose for the first time – spilling out and over
    - There is a visual flood that saturates the eyes
- He sees 24 other thrones surrounding THE throne
  - And on these thrones are “24 elders”
    - And in the midst of the throne and the thrones, are what John calls 4 living beings
      - Each with six wings and many eyes in front and in back
        - Each with different faces, yet seemingly familiar
          - Could you imagine the consuming emotion John is experiencing?

If this were not enough, to add to his awestruck state, the Lord Jesus Himself has asked that John write, record and distribute

- All that he has seen, is seeing and will see
  - The only word sufficient enough – overwhelming!
- It's not a wonder there is so much worship in heaven
  - **9** “Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, **10** the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: **11** “You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.”

When we see Almighty God for who He is

- Worship is the only appropriate response.
  - But we don't have to wait until heaven to be in His presence

- Jesus has revealed God to us
- Jesus, as Hebrews says is “the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person,”
  - And we can see and know God through Jesus as revealed in the pages of the Bible
    - And when we see Him, our response should be that of worship. Amen?

But in heaven, John is experiencing God’s presence like never before

- And partaking in his first heavenly worship service (so to speak)
  - And as he’s taking in the breadth of all that’s transpiring,
    - The scene tapers down to a single focus
- The scene in heaven moves from John’s view of the grandeur of all that is in the heavenly Holy of Holies
  - To John’s attention begin drawn to a scroll.
    - A specific and very important scroll in the right hand of the Father who sits upon the throne
- But not just a scroll, John’s attention is also drawn to a Lamb
  - A very identifiable Lamb that is described as though it had been slain
    - And this Lamb is taking the scroll out of the Father’s hand
      - This is what we will be looking at this morning.
        - It’s quite an astounding scene so...

Let’s read the first 7 verses to capture the scene and then come back and expound on what’s going on

- **5** 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. **2** Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?” **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.
  - **4** So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. **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.”
    - **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. **7** Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

The big picture of what we're seeing here is, again, the scroll being seized by a Lamb because He was the only One worthy to do such a thing

- But what I want us to start with this morning is with what's going on with John himself
  - Because as John is watching the events unfold before him, we see something unexpected in verse 4
    - There we read that John "wept much"
- We see the same Greek phrase in Luke 19 when Jesus enters into Jerusalem as the sacrificial Lamb of God
  - "**41** Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, **42** saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things *that make* for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes."
    - Matt 26: **75** And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." So he went out and wept bitterly."
- What John is seeing in heaven is making him weep bitterly.
  - The word means to sob uncontrollably. To intensely and irrepressibly convulse with weeping

We often hear in the church that there's 'no tears in heaven'

- Eric Clapton even wrote a song based on this misunderstanding
  - But that's not quite accurate, is it?
    - The truth is, is that we do see tears in heaven
      - Seeing John here crying uncontrollably in the presence of God in heaven makes the point
- But thanks be unto God that there will come a time when the Lord **will** wipe away every tear
  - When the new heaven and new earth are created
    - And the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God and...
      - 21:3 "...the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There

shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away”

- Sadly, for those who reject Jesus will never experience this.
  - Those who have received Jesus and been born-again,
    - Will experience the loving hand of God wiping tears from our faces
      - But those that reject Him
        - **Luke 13:28** “There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”
          - A stark and sad reality for many that should cause us to increase in prayer for those we love
- Here in our text, we see John, in the presence of God, crying and one wonders – why is he crying so convulsively?
  - What about this scroll and seeing that no one is able to open it...
    - What about that scene brings John to tears?

I think he’s weeping because he knows that everything he has lived for is being held in the hand of the One that sits on the throne

- And it means everything to him that it could be opened.
  - Because everything that he’s living for, and everything that his friends have died for
    - And literally thousands of Christians have been killed for during his lifetime....
- And he has stood, and is standing firm, for his testimony of Jesus Christ
  - And he somehow knows that everything his life has stood for is riding on the opening of this particular scroll.
    - If this scroll cannot be opened, then his faith – and the faith of all his friends and all the first century martyrs – it’s all in vain.
      - This scroll MUST be opened!

So, what is this scroll? What does it mean, and what is written on it that is so important to your and my faith

- That it brings the great apostle John to convulsively weep in the presence of Almighty God?
  - First, let me point out a few things here in the text that might help us understand
    - **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. **2** Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?” **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. **4** So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.”

- There are four things I want us to noticed about this scroll

First - It is in the right hand of God who is sitting on His throne

- The phrase “right hand”, as you probably already know, speaks of power and authority and sovereign control
  - To see the Almighty sitting on His majestic throne with one specific scroll in His right hand
    - The utter importance of this scroll can not be overstated
- How much more amazing when we think about the position Jesus took when He ascended to heaven
  - Mark 16: **19** “So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God”
    - Hebrews 10: **11** And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. **12** But this Man [*Jesus*], after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, **13** from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.
      - Interesting last phrase from our current viewpoint in Revelation
- So the first thing we notice is that by virtue of the place of the scroll,
  - We see the unmatched importance and value of this particular scroll

The second thing we noticed is that there is writing both on the inside and on the outside of the scroll

- There are some who think this is an unusual thing – to have writing on both sides

- But, as I understand it, it was not that uncommon – especially in contract and legal documents
  - And usually the inside contained the message
    - But the outside signified, or identified, the one who was able to open the scroll

And this scroll that had been written on both sides was sealed with 7 seals

- Here we see the number 7 again here in Revelation as a symbol of completion; of perfection
  - And each seal, as we will see later, once each are broken,
    - Not only open the scroll, but also reveal the judgments that are coming on the earth – more on this in a bit

The last thing we observe in the text here is that no one was worthy to open it

- So we have an important and extremely valuable scroll that is in the right hand of the Father who is sitting on His throne
  - And this scroll has writing on both sides
    - And sealed with 7 seals
      - That can only be opened by One who is worthy enough
- Again, not to be redundant, but the importance of this scroll, so it seems, cannot be overstated
  - So what is this scroll and what is in it?

Let's start with what it contains. What's in the scroll?

- I think the best I can say it is that everything that is in Revelation 6 onward is in the scroll
  - That whatever Revelation talks about is in the 7 sealed scroll
- When each of the seals is broken, more of the message is revealed about the coming judgments of the tribulation period
  - So, when the first seal is broken, John sees the white horse going out to conquer
    - And when the 2<sup>nd</sup> seal is broken, John sees a fiery red horse going out to take peace from the earth
      - And so forth
- When the 7<sup>th</sup> seal is broken
  - The rest of the scroll is open to view
    - and contains the trumpet judgments and the bowls, or vials, of the wrath of God

- And when the Lamb breaks the seals, it is not merely a disclosure of the scroll's contents, but also the activation of those contents.

When we look at the book of Revelation, we see 7 seal judgments, 7 trumpet judgments and 7 bowl judgments

- All these judgments are contained within the scroll that has 7 seals on it
  - I think some make the mistake to think that these are all separate segments,
    - but they are all contained within the scroll itself
- This also tells speaks to the chronological and sequential structure of the book of Revelation
  - It speaks to the sequential nature of the three sets of seven judgments – how they unfold
- There are some who believe that the judgments we see in the book – the seals, the trumpets, the bowls –
  - That they all happen simultaneously.
    - That at the same time the first seal is broken, the first trumpet judgment is also happening and so is the first bowl judgment
      - All in a simultaneous manner
        - One only needs to lay out the judgments side by side to see the major differences in the judgments
          - To know a simultaneous view is unfounded
- The reality is, that the events of Revelation are not simultaneous, but rather sequential in nature
  - They happen one after another
    - The seals, trumpets, and bowls are successive judgments that proceed out of each other.

So, this is what is contained within the scroll itself. The sequential unfolding of what remains in the book of Revelation.

- Now, what is the meaning of the scroll?
  - Let me pause for a moment and explain why we are going through this scroll with such detail
    - Because once we understand what is in the scroll and the purpose of the scroll

- Then we have the proper foundational understanding as to why Jesus is the only One who is able to break the seals.
    - So stay with me here – this is all necessary.
- So, back to the question: What is the purpose of the scroll? What is the meaning of it?
  - Why a scroll? Why is it in God’s right hand? Why is it that Jesus is the only one worthy to open it?

There are many thoughts about this from scholars

- Some think the scroll is the OT, or the OT and NT combined. Some thinks it’s a book of prophecy
  - Oddly, some think the scroll is a certificate of divorce against Israel. That God is divorcing Israel
- I think an attractive school of thought is this is God’s will. That it’s His “final settlement of the affairs of the universe” (Barklay)
  - And there’s good backing for this approach
    - The ancient wills of Caesar Augustus and Emperor Vespasian were sealed with 7 seals
      - As Ladd explains it the “book is in the form of an ancient will, which was usually sealed with the seals of seven witnesses. It contains God’s inheritance for His people, which is founded upon the death of His son”
        - This thought of the scroll being God’s will is an attractive one and many hold to it
- Personally, I think this lacks the necessary answer to the context of redemption that we see in chapter 5
  - Look at verse 9 “**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, **10** And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.
    - When the slain Lamb is counted as worthy to open the scroll
      - And after the Lamb takes the scroll from the Father’s hand
        - The four living creatures and the 24 elders sing a new song that speaks of redemption and of reigning on earth
          - I think this gives us a clue as to the purpose of the scroll

My personal thought is that this scroll is actually the title deed to the earth.

- And by opening of the scroll, the Lamb takes as His inheritance that which He had already *purchased*.
  - His inheritance includes an enduring kingdom and the title deed to the earth
    - We see this prophetic understanding in Psalm 2:6-8 ““Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion.” **7** “I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, ‘You *are* My Son, Today I have begotten You. **8** Ask of Me, and I will give *You* The nations *for* Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession.”

In a very brief encapsulation (there is really much to this), the thought on this view is that, of course, God owns everything

- But when He created this world, God gave all dominion of the earth to man. We see this in Genesis 1:26
  - “let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”
    - David reinforces this truth: “You made [mankind] rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet” - Psalm 8:6
- It’s thought that in giving mankind dominion - that he was given the title deed to the earth
  - But because man rebelled against God – through the fall of man – man lost that dominion
    - And relinquished dominion – that title deed – to Satan
      - And that Satan would hold the title - he would have dominion of this earth
- Now, obviously God is ultimately in control; but He has allowed Satan this control
  - Scripture tells us that Satan is called the prince of this world (John 12:31; John 14:30)
    - He is called the ‘god of this world’ in 2 Cor. 11:4

One of the stronger illustrations of this is found in Luke 4

- **5** Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

- **6** And the devil said to Him, “All this authority I will give You, and their glory; ***for this has been delivered to me***, and I give it to whomever I wish. **7** Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.”
  - Interestingly, Jesus doesn’t rebuke him for his claims to dominion over the earth
    - Nor does He, at that time, claim His rightful ownership over the kingdoms of the earth
- Instead, what we read in Revelation chapter 11 - when the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet is sounded
  - We read in verse 15 –
    - “Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world ***have become the kingdoms*** of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever”

And so, the thought is that God gave ownership of the earth to man

- But because man sinned, he defaults on the whole deal and forfeited his dominion
  - And the title deed was allowed, by God, to be picked up by Satan
    - And there is has been for thousands of years
      - and Satan has had this planet earth under his control ever since

And that is why Jesus came! To redeem and ransom that which is rightfully His

- Jesus came on a redemption mission – to redeem mankind and take back the earth
  - And the price and the payment were accomplished on the cross of Calvary.
    - The price was His blood and the payment was His death
- And Satan was defeated on the cross - When Jesus was crucified, dead, buried and rose from the grave, Satan was defeated
  - The problem was, that the Devil didn’t lay down his arms and surrender
    - But that, too, was in the plan of God’s redemption of mankind
      - He knew that His purchase would not be relinquished by the squatter until Jesus put all things under His feet

And I believe this is what we might be seeing here in Revelation 5 with the scroll

- That God has taken back what was rightfully His
  - And that the deed was redeemed by the work of Jesus Christ on the cross
    - And I know there is much, much more to this than we've covered
      - More along the lines of the Kinsman redeemer – the Goel
        - And I wish we had more time to dive into those depths
- But this explains what John is sees take place in heaven
  - It explains what is in the scroll and what the purpose of the scroll is
    - It is the title deed to the earth that contains the judgments and wrath of God poured out on rebellious mankind and the devil
      - The setting in order the earth that has been under the power and control of the wicked one for so long

And so, back to our text, when John watches what's happening and he sees "a strong angel", verse 2,

- "proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" **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."
  - This is why verse 4 says that he wept much.
    - All his life is wrapped up in the truth of the Messiah
      - And to hear no one, not even the "strong angel" was able to break the seals
- No one was worthy to open the scroll to bring about a future of redemption
  - In a sense, John may be thinking that the horrors of sin, sickness, murder, death and the warping of all things God intended for good
    - would continue unabated for unending millennia
      - mankind would remain *forever* and completely lost.
        - Locked within an eternity of generations darkened by depravity and pain, there would be forever *no hope*
- How could such a thought not bring an overwhelming sadness to the heart of John

But Jesus! Verse 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.” **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. **7** Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.”

So many men have been willing to rule the world!

- Genghis Kahn, Napoleon, Hitler, currently it’s the nation of Islam
  - All willing to rule the world
    - But there is only One that is worthy!
      - Jesus!
- And without a spoken word
  - The Lamb came to the throne of the Father and took the scroll out of the right hand
    - Notice – he took it. The Father didn’t hand it to Him – He took it
      - Again, revealing the Deity of Jesus

Next week we will revisit these verses to expound more, but let me leave you with this:

- When you think of the suffering that has occurred over the course of the centuries since Adam sinned
  - it makes you want to sob convulsively.
    - In His longsuffering, not willing that any should perish eternally, God has told His Son to wait.
      - Jesus is busy building His church.
- One day, and we believe it is imminent, the Father will send the Son to retrieve the church from the earth.
  - Then this ceremony in Heaven will occur once-and-for-all as Jesus takes the scroll and breaks its seals

And any weeping, will be turned to worship – as we see in the later portion of this passage

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