

WORTHY IS THE LAMB!

Chapter 5

John is awestruck as he observes the scene in Heaven, I saw (5:1) ... I saw (v.2) ... I beheld (v.6) ... I beheld (v.11) ... God is seated on the throne in the centre, encircled by an emerald rainbow, with the four living creatures, surrounded by the twenty-four elders (possibly the twelve Old Testament patriarchs and the twelve apostles) ... There were flashings of lightning and roars of thunder, and the Holy Spirit was burning like fire at the front of the throne. The four living creatures were praising non-stop, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come (4:8). ... And the twenty-four elders had risen from their thrones, removed the crowns from their heads, and laid them at the feet of the King of kings, with the words welling up from the depths of their souls, ¹¹ Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. ... And John is overwhelmed!

The moment approaches when in his right hand the Occupant of the throne lifts a scroll (βιβλίον). The scroll was written on the inside and the outside, and it was sealed with seven secure seals. It was the full and complete 'title deeds' to God's creation, the earth in particular, and how He will reclaim the inheritance for His Son, ^{Ps. 87} I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. ⁸ Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. ⁹ Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. This will be achieved by the Divine judgments soon to be poured out.

The strong and mighty unnamed angel *boomed* the question, ² Who is worthy to open the *Scroll*, and to loose the seals thereof? ... An Old Testament background is found in Jer. 32:6-25 where Jeremiah as the 'kinsman redeemer' to his cousin purchased a field, prior to the Babylonian invasion. Two copies of the transaction were made, and both were witnessed by trustworthy people. One copy was sealed and the other was open. Both were carefully buried in an earthen vessel awaiting the future time when evidence would be required to establish the rightful ownership of the land. Only the rightful owner could open the sealed scroll to claim the inheritance for which he had paid the price. ... And that is what is happening with the scroll in Heaven awaiting its unsealing, i.e. the earth is the Lord's by right of creation but He gave the tenancy to man (Gen. 1:26ff.). Through sin, that tenancy was usurped ...but through the victory of Christ on the cross, the Kinsman-Redeemer Himself will reclaim and open the seal for out of all the people everywhere, there was none other worthy to open it. Not a single person stepped forward, *none* (v.3)! John wept much for he was distraught with grief (v.4), - he audibly wailed until one of the twenty-four

elders broke the silence and comforted him, ⁵ Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda [*Gen. 49:8-10*], the Root of David [*Is. 11:1,10*], hath prevailed [*conquered, subdued, overcome*] to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. ... God had it 'all in hand'! ... The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David has gained the victory! "G.E. Ladd, "The future and final victory of Messiah is but an extension of the rule He now enjoys by virtue of the victory already won".

And as John watches speechless to see what would happen next, - ⁶ I beheld, and, lo, - in the centre where the throne was, and the four living ones, and the twenty-four elders, - stood a Lamb as it had been slain [*cf. Is. 53:7*] ... But how can that be for the Jews believe the Messiah to be powerful and one day will liberate them from the invaders?! ... A 'Lion', yes ... but a 'Lamb' as it had been slain?!

Nonetheless, the Lamb, - having seven horns [*omnipotence*] and seven eyes [*omniscience*], which are the seven Spirits of God, - proceeded to the One on the throne Who was holding the scroll, ⁷ And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. ... Out of all the citizens in Heaven, none was worthy and authorised except the ⁶ Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

At that point, when the Lord Jesus, - the Lamb slain, the Lion of Judah, the Root of David, - held the scroll in His hands [*cf. 1:1*, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders prostrated themselves before the Lamb, in worship. They recognised the Lamb as God, the Son of God (4:10). ... And John noticed how each of the twenty-four elders was holding a harp [*'lyre'*] (*κιθάρα, kithara*, ... from which comes the word 'guitar'). The harps, of course, were used in worship throughout the Old Testament.

In addition, the twenty-four elders were holding golden vials [*broad shallow cups used in the tabernacle and the temple, where they were associated with the altar*] full of odours [*incense*], which are the prayers of saints [*through the ages*]. They then began to sing a 'new song' (cf. Ps. 33:3; 40:2; 42:10; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1) which opened with the reaffirmation of Christ's 'worthiness' to take and open the scroll and also elaborates on the Lamb as it had been slain in v.6, ... ⁹ for thou wast slain *σφαζω, butchered, slaughtered like an animal for sacrifice*, and hast redeemed *ἀγοράζω, purchased, paid the price*] us to God by thy blood out of every kindred [*tribe, clan*], and tongue [*language*], and people [*race*], and nation *ἔθνος*, ... and the results of what He has done, in our redemption and purchase ... because we are His ... ¹⁰ And hast made us unto our God kings [*kingdom*] and priests [*therefore, it is to God be all the glory*]: and we shall reign on the earth. ... As kings and priests we have unfettered and unlimited access into His glorious presence!

As John continued to ‘behold’ (v.11 ... for the fourth time, v. 1,2,6), he heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the *[living ones]* and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands. The ancient Greek language had no word for an indefinite number, - no word could describe the multitude John witnessed around the throne. The writer to the Hebrews describes, **Heb. 12:1** we also are compassed about with *so great [so vast, incalculable] a cloud of witnesses*. ... And they began, - all *saying* harmoniously together with a loud [*μέγας*] voice [*φωνή*], - focussing only on the Lamb, the Lord Jesus, **12** Worthy is the Lamb that was slain [*also v. 6,9*] to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing [*cf. Ps. 148:1-14*]. ... He has provided a perfect redemption, surpassing all human expectations, as He achieved everything in accordance with His Father’s will and pleasure. ... Everything the Redeemed enjoy is because of their Redeemer!

In fulfilment of such verses as Ps. 69:34 (Let the heaven and earth praise him, the seas, and every thing that moveth therein), the great hymn of the redeemed creation reaches its pinnacle, **13** *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, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. ... The sound of their praise echoes across all of God’s Kingdom. It is the solid truth He has expressed throughout time and the pages of Scripture, such as, **Is. 43:10** ... before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. **11** I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour. ... **13** Yea, before the day was I am he ... **21** This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise. ... Endless worship! Ceaseless praise! Unfettered adoration!

And the four living ones added their praise, repeating, Amen ... “Let it be”. The scene concludes with the twenty-four elders falling down again and worshipping Him that liveth for ever and ever. ... When John saw the glory of the risen Saviour on the island of Patmos, he recorded, **17** And when I saw him, I fell [*πίπτω*] at his feet. ... as did the twenty-four elders in 4:10, and again in 5:8 and 5:14.

Words cannot express how Heaven will be. What a privilege to be saved and to be given a taste of what awaits us in eternity ... and how we shall be with Him forever, praising Him for all He has done for us.

To God be the glory, great things He hath done ...
 And great our rejoicing through Jesus His Son,
 But purer and higher and greater will be
 Our joy and our wonder when Jesus we see.