

**VICTORIOUS LIFE CHURCH BIBLE STUDY SERIES:
THE BOOK OF REVELATION
PASTOR WILLIAM A. LEE, II
CHAPTER FIVE: The Throne and the Scroll**

In this chapter, John describes a scene of drama and praise in heaven. In chapter 4 we saw the scene set around the throne of God, where there were twenty-four elders and four animal-like beings which was a reflection of the vision of Daniel in Daniel chapter 7 where the Ancient one is sitting on the throne. The focus of Revelation 4 was the throne but here John begins by referring to the throne but then turns his focus from the throne to the scroll that is being held by the Lord who is seated on the throne. The Ancient One sitting on the throne in the Daniel 7 vision; and that person is God. Further the one like a son of man in Daniel 7 is directly tied to the Lamb who was slaughtered in Revelation 5; and that person is Messiah. There is also a connection between Daniel 12:4 where he speaks of sealing up the book of knowledge about the future that God gave to Daniel in a vision.

Daniel 12:4

4 But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

With John's vision of the scroll sealed with 7 seals in Revelation 5, which God handed over to the Lamb who was slaughtered that it would finally be opened and its contents revealed. So essentially Revelation chapter 5 is a fulfillment of Daniel 12:4; although we must acknowledge that it is only a partial fulfillment because even though the contents are being revealed to John, the actions the content describes have yet to happen.

Revelation 5

1. And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

This is the first of thirty-nine occurrences of the phrase "and I saw." It serves to remind the reader that John describes exactly what he sees with his own eyes.

a book written within and on the backside

This means that this scroll was unusual. It wasn't common practice to write on both sides of the scroll. This means that whatever information was on this scroll, there was a lot of it – almost more than the scroll can contain. Ancient scrolls were read *horizontally*, not *vertically*. The rolls of the scroll were on the left and the right, and the writing lay in narrow columns about three inches wide, written on a substance somewhat like brown paper. The scroll was held in the left hand, and unrolled with the right; as the reading went on, the previously read portion was re-rolled. On such a typical scroll, the Book of Revelation would fill a scroll 15 feet long.

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. Through the centuries, commentators suggest many different ideas for what this **scroll** is, and what was **written** upon it. It is important to not that whatever was on it only Jesus was found worthy to open it.

* Some think the scroll was the *Old Testament*, or the *Old and New Testaments together*, or fulfilled prophecy. But these ideas look back, not forward, and John wrote of things related to *things which must take place after this (Revelation 4:1)*. Additionally, if the scroll was the Old or New Testament, who is unworthy to open *that* scroll?

* Some think the scroll was God's claim of divorce against Israel, but there is little Scriptural evidence for this idea, and who is unworthy to open *that* scroll? Jeremiah 3:8

* Some think the scroll was *God's sentence against the enemies of the church*. Perhaps this is true, but only in an indirect sense; but who is unworthy to open *that* scroll?

* Some think the scroll was *the text of the Book of Revelation*, or the next few chapters. But this is rather unlikely considering how the idea of the scroll is communicated, and who would be unworthy to open *that* scroll?

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. Roman law required a will to be sealed seven times. The seven sealed book therefore is the comprehensive program of God culminating in the second coming of Christ. The book of the counsels, decrees, and purposes of God relating to his church, as to what more remarkable things should happen to it to the end of the world; which book was in the hand of the Father. The idea here is that God has a book in which the history of the universe is already written. He has *written* the history of the world in advance, He *holds* in His hand the history of the world in advance, and He *initiates* the consummation of all history. *Only God can hold this scroll.*

2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? 3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

A strong angel: 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.

No one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it: John could not have said it any stronger. It was as if the **strong angel** looked through the entire universe to find someone worthy, and did not find anyone worthy to even **look at** the scroll. There was no answer to the strong angel's challenge because the creation is utterly incapable of deciding or effecting its own destiny. Someone above the order of created beings must determine the course of history – only God can unfold this plan.

4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

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 be indefinitely postponed.

No one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it: To look upon the scroll, one must have the right to open the scroll and possess it – and no creature **was found worthy**.

5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

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.

One seated on the throne—God, the Father. The Father has willed that the Son oversees its execution. John 5:22, 27 and Acts 10:42 indicate that Jesus is Judge of all.

John 5:22

22 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:

Acts 10:42

42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.

This is the central purpose of the Revelation: to reveal the Son's execution of the Father's judgment against both the living and the dead.

The Messianic title **Lion of the tribe of Judah** comes from

Genesis 49:9-10

8 “Your brothers will praise you, Judah. Your hand will be at the throat of your enemies, and your father’s children will bow down to you. 9 Judah is a lion cub. My son, you have gone up from the prey. Crouching like a lion, he lies down, Like a lioness, who would dare rouse him? 10 The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until the one comes, who owns them both, and to him will belong the allegiance of nations.

Isaiah 31:4

4 For thus hath the Lord spoken unto me, Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, he will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them: so shall the Lord of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof.

Hosea 11:10

10 They shall walk after the Lord: he shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.

The title **Root of David** comes from

Isaiah 11:10

10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

Revelation 22:16

16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

The Lion is a fitting image of our Messiah.

1. For the excellency of his strength.
2. For his heroical spirit.
3. For his principality; the lion is the king of beasts.
4. For his vigilance; the lion sleeps with open eyes.”

6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a 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. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

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. 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**). When men want symbols of power they conjure up ferocious beasts and birds of prey such as those that represent nations and sports teams. But the representative of the kingdom of heaven is a **Lamb**, representing humility, gentleness, and sacrificial love. The **Lamb** looks **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 leaving those who will be judged without excuse. The idea is that the sacrifice of Jesus is still *fresh* and *current* before God the Father shows that there is nothing stale or outworn in the work of Jesus on the cross. Thousands of years later, it is still fresh as the day He died on the cross.

As it had been slain: "As if now *in the act of being offered*." So important is the sacrificial offering of Christ in the sight of God that he is still represented as being in the very act of pouring out his blood for the sins and offenses of man. This gives great advantage to faith; when any soul comes to the throne of grace, he finds a sacrifice there provided for him to offer to God. Thus all succeeding generations find they have the *continual* sacrifice ready, and the newly-shed blood to offer." (Clarke) 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**). Throughout the Scriptures, **eyes** suggest knowledge and wisdom, and **horns** suggest power. This **Lamb** has knowledge, wisdom, and power fulfilled perfectly: **seven horns and seven eyes**.

Which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth: The Holy Spirit is not only the *Spirit of God* (in the sense of being the "Spirit of the Father"), but also *the Spirit of Christ*

Romans 8:9

9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

The seven *eyes of the LORD* are a picture of omniscience drawn from the prophet Zechariah

Zechariah 4:10

10 For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

Then He came and took the scroll: 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.

8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. **9** And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; **10** And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb: When the Lamb took the scroll, the response was immediate. High-ranking angels and redeemed man joined to worship the Lamb. **Each having a harp:** The **harp** is “Properly, a zithern or kind of guitar, played either with the hand, or with a pick.” (Alford) Worship in heaven is accompanied by music. As one might expect, this is the passage that started the idea that people in heaven will have harps.

And golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints: With their **golden bowls full of incense**, the elders symbolically presented the prayers of the saints. However, they did not intercede for the saints, functioning as mediators for God’s people. We are reminded that *there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5)*. It is also possible that these prayers represent the long-standing prayer of God’s people, which is ‘Your kingdom come.’”

Golden bowls full of incense: In this we see how precious the prayers of the saints are to God. He regards them as a sweet smelling incense, as if set in precious **golden bowls**. The connection between prayer and incense is shown in

Psalms 141:2 “Let my prayer be set before You as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

Incense has a pleasing aroma, it ascends to heaven, and it needs fire before it is of any use.

And they sang a new song: The elders sang a **new song**, for mercies that are forever new.

By a *new song* is understood as an excellent song or a song that pleased God the best.

“It is a new thing that the Son of God should become man. It is a new thing to ascend into the heavens with a body. It is a new thing to give remission of sins to men. It is a new thing for men to be sealed with the Holy Spirit. It is a new thing to receive the priesthood of sacred observance, and to look for a kingdom of unbounded promise.” (Victorinus)

11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; **12** Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

In the days of the Apostle John, Roman Emperors were celebrated upon their arrival with the Latin expression *vere dignus*, which is translated **You are worthy**. Here the true Ruler of the world is honored.

reign on the earth: In the praise of [Revelation 4:11](#), the emphasis was on God's work of *creation*. Here, the emphasis is on His work of *redemption*.

- The song honors the *price* of redemption: **for You were slain**.
- The song honors the *work* of redemption: **have redeemed us**.
- The song honors the *destination* of redemption: **have redeemed us to God**.
- The song honors the *payment* of redemption: **by Your blood**.
- The song honors the *scope* of redemption: **every tribe and tongue and people and nation**.
- The song honors the *length* of redemption: **have made us kings and priests to our God**.
- The song honors the *result* of redemption: **and we shall reign on the earth**.

Kings and priests to our God: Believers are **kings** because of their royal birth and their destiny to reign with Jesus. They are **priests** because they need no mediator other than Jesus Himself.

13 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, 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.

14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

I heard the voice of many angels around the throne: 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.

The number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands: This is an innumerable company of angels.

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain: In their song, the angels did not offer praise for their redemption. This is because angels are not (to the best of our knowledge) *subjects* of this redemption but they are careful observers of it, and are therefore able to praise God because of it

1 Peter 1:12

12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

The angels can clearly see the greatness of God's work in redeeming fallen men, so in response they credit **power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing** to the Lamb. In the same way, we can praise God for the way He works in the lives of other people.

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 worshipped Him who lives forever and ever.

Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb: This combined worship of the Father and the Lamb is strong testimony to the deity of Jesus. "There cannot be the slightest doubt that the Lamb is to be reckoned with God and as God." (L. Morris)

"Now if Jesus Christ were not properly God this would be *idolatry*, as it would be giving to the *creature* what belongs to the *Creator*." (Clarke)

Fell down and worshipped Him: 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, the Princes, and many Kings 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.