

"Heavenly Scene" Revelation 5

In the fourth chapter of Revelation we were taken to a scene in heaven. In a very descriptive way John wrote of a worship scene around the throne of God. Those present were four living creatures or angelic beings, as well as the twenty-four elders representing the church which had already been raptured. We found them praising God and reminding Him that He was worthy of all praise, honor and glory because of who He was and what He had done.

As we approach the fifth chapter we see that this heavenly scene continues, but there is much more that is added to it. The Apostle notes that in the right hand of God is a book, or really a scroll, because they did not have books as we know them at that time. He also points out that it has writing on both sides and is sealed by seven seals. Though it is not clear here and will come out later, those seals are not down the outer edge of that scroll. When the first one is broken, there is a message. Then you break the next one and there is another message, all the way down to the end. That scroll in the hand of God becomes the basis for the rest of the book of Revelation. In it are the events that will take place and bring to a climax the very end of human history. So, chapter five of Revelation will prepare us for the events that will take us, one at a time to that point. We might also note that a Roman will was also always sealed seven times.

Scrolls are nothing new. In Daniel 12:4 the scroll was to be sealed "unto the time of the end." We also read of one in Ezekiel 2:9-10. Also we should note that every time a sealed scroll appears, it contains something to do with the unveiling of God's purposes at the climax of man's day. It is now time to open the scroll to unveil the events of the tribulation period.

Now just what is this seven sealed scroll? It is the title deed to this old earth. When man fell, God held the title deed to the earth, but Satan would have control over it until God would take it back. There is coming a day when God will take this planet back from Satan and give it to His heir. This scroll will remain sealed until someone is found worthy to take it from God and open the seals. As this scroll is unrolled we will be able to see just how God will accomplish this.

There is a beautiful illustration of how this works given to us in Jeremiah 32. The prophet lived just prior to and even after the fall of Judah and Jerusalem and into the 70 years of the Babylonian captivity. He had been preaching that if the people did not return to the Lord, Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed, and they would be hauled off as captives to Babylon. For doing this he was put in prison. While in prison, the word of the Lord came to the prophet telling him that his cousin Hanameel would be coming to see him with a real deal. Hanameel had a piece of land he wanted to get rid of because it was in Anathoth, in an area that had already been captured by the Babylonian troops. It was not worth much, so he wanted to get rid of it.

He went to the jail where Jeremiah was being held and thought he might be able to get a quick sale. He asked Jeremiah if he would like to buy a piece of property in his home town that could be had for a cheap price. Though Jeremiah probably thought the offer was ridiculous, but we must read Jeremiah 32:8. "So Hanameel mine uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself. Then I knew this was the word of the LORD." So he bought it for 17 shekels of silver.

Jeremiah was not crazy for making this purchase, for he already knew from what he had written in chapters 25 and 29, that his people would return to that place after the seventy years of captivity. Though he knew that he would not be alive then, the field would be a valuable asset for his heirs. According to verses 9 to 15, Jeremiah bought the land, signed the title deed, and had it recorded by the authorities. Then he kept one copy and placed another in an earthen vessel that was sealed, so that his heirs could claim it after the 70 years of captivity ended.

Now getting back to Revelation five, we have God holding the title deed to the earth in his right hand, all sealed, waiting the time for His heir to take the deed, unseal it, and take back this earth from the usurper Satan. Just as the Babylonians had usurped the land from the Jews for a period of time, Satan had usurped the earth until God's rightful heir could be given the title deed and take control of the earth once again. The Bible says, "The earth is the Lords," but meanwhile it is in the hands of the enemy.

In Revelation 5:2-3, a strong angel cried out "who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to loose the seals thereof." What a sad situation, for until someone could be found to do this, the earth would remain in the control of Satan. It was because of this that John "wept much." He had already seen such glorious sights in the heavenly realm. Would the earth be left forever in the hands of that great usurper Satan? No wonder he was weeping so! He wanted the power of the evil one to be broken so badly. He wanted judgment brought upon those who had turned their backs on God, had Jesus slain, and wanted no thoughts of any God. John thought the situation was hopeless. By the way, things have not changed at all. There is a great effort going on to destroy anything and even anyone who claims to be a Christian. Think of the persecuted church worldwide, as well as those in our own countries that want anything to do with God eliminated.

Then one of the elders told John to stop weeping, as the situation was not as hopeless as he thought. He said, "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." We should note that it was one of the elders who informed John about this. It was not the strong angel of verse one, for angels do not get redeemed. On the other hand, the elder would be one who was redeemed by the blood of Christ during the church age. This elder, whose body had been raised at the rapture,

would have known who was worthy to take the scroll and redeem the earth, and that Christ was the rightful heir to do so.

Beginning in verse five, we have some very interesting descriptive phrases to prove that Christ has the right to rule and reign. First of all, He is called “the Lion of the tribe of Judah.” What does that mean? To find out, we must go back to Genesis 49. In this chapter Jacob called his sons to him just before his death, and made certain promises. In verse 10 we read what he said concerning the tribe that would come from Judah. “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.” Judah was the lion tribe, and through that tribe would come the rulers of the nation. Furthermore, Shiloh means, “the one whose right it is.” So, in Revelation five, the elder is saying that Jesus has the right to take this scroll and bring God’s judgments contained therein, for coming from the tribe of Judah, this would fulfill the promise made by Jacob or Israel thousands of years before.

Secondly, in verse five of our chapter in Revelation we read. He is the Root of David.” This declares that He comes from the proper lineage to rule. In Revelation 22:16 we read the words of our Savior, “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and offspring, of David, and the bright and morning star.” Not only did Jesus come from the right tribe to rule, by the also was of the kingly line of David, giving Him the absolute right of rulership.

He did not only have these qualification, but He also prevailed. He had come and paid the sin debt for the entire world. He had offered His precious blood to pay the price God required for sin. He had every right to take the scroll from His Father’s hand, open it, and take back this wicked world from Satan. No one else could ever qualify to do this.

In verse six John writes, “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 unto all the earth.” Here John saw Jesus as a bleeding lamb and not as a lion. It was not an ordinary lamb as it had seven horns and seven eyes. We can ask ourselves the question; how can a bleeding lamb take over the world from Satan? This lamb does not look like one who could conquer the world. On top of that the word for lamb is “arnios.” It is used only twice in the New Testament, and has the concept of a small pet lamb. But this is a special lamb, for He is God’s lamb who came to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

To comprehend what is going on here, we must turn our eyes to the Jewish Passover. The Jewish people could not take just any old lamb for Passover. They had to pick out a spotless lamb without any blemishes. They had to take it home to be with the family for four days, so it became like a pet. Then they had to slay this little lamb the children had come to love. This is a beautiful picture of the lamb, Jesus. He was the spotless one that came into the world as a little baby. Then He was examined for 33 years as He loved the world. Then He was slain. I Corinthians 5:7 says, “For even Christ our Passover is slain for us.” The Greek word for

slain means violently slain, ripped and torn. This is Christ as the dying redeemer. Without paying this awful price, He could never have redeemed anyone.

We also need to take note that this Lamb that had been slain was seen standing. When an animal or person dies, they are never seen standing, but are always seen lying down. What is being presented here is the core of Christianity, the resurrection of Christ. Though He died, and was buried, on the third day He arose from the dead, and is at present in heaven with the heavenly Father, seated at His right hand. Because He lives, we, too, as believers in Him, have the blessed hope of a future resurrection and an eternity with Him in glory.

Back in verse five it says He “prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.” The word “prevail” in the original has the meaning “to conquer.” Christ alone, this Lion/Lamb would be the one who would be able to open the scroll, pour out God’s judgments on the earth and take it back from the great usurper Satan.

Finally, in verse seven we read; “And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.” Not only was Christ seen in heaven, but now he takes the scroll to begin the judgments written therein that would eventually lead to the doom of Satan and God reclaiming the earth. In our next lesson we will consider the reaction that takes place in heaven when He takes that scroll out of His Father’s right hand.

But before we go, let’s consider a couple of things we should learn from this passage. First, in that heavenly scene when no one could be found to take back the earth, the broken heart of the Apostle John. When it says he wept much, it shows his deep concern that the battle might be lost and the earth would remain under the control of Satan. I really wonder how concerned we are about this. As I look at things happening in the world today, it seems as though Satan knows his time is short and is doing all he can to destroy Bible-believing Christianity all around the world.

Finally, before all this takes place, the church will be raptured out of here. This could happen at any moment. Should Christ come to take the true believers out today, would you be ready to meet Him? Or, would you not be taken, and just left behind to face God’s judgments? I would ask you to put your faith in Jesus even right now before it is too late. It is your choice, and for you it will mean the difference between heaven and hell.