

## Worthy Is The Lamb

**Memory Text:** “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.’” (Revelation 5:5)

**Setting The Stage:** Revelation 1 portrays Jesus as our heavenly high priest walking in the midst of the seven golden lampstands. Jesus tells John that what he sees he is to write, and what he is to write has to do with what happening in John’s day as well as what would take place after his day (v. 19). While Jesus is seen verily walking among the seven golden lampstands (walking in the midst of heavens sanctuary in the holy place), those lampstands represent seven churches.

Revelation 2 and 3 rehearse the letters Jesus has John write to the seven churches of then Asia Minor. Those letters sent to actual existing churches in John’s day, also represent seven time periods of Christian history from John’s day to the last days. Those messages are for all Christian’s at all time, but have a special bearing on God’s people living prior to the return of Jesus. These messages serve as warning, encouragement, comfort, and appeal to each one of us.

Note: Jesus is seen. He is seen in the holy place of heaven’s sanctuary (in the midst of the seven golden lampstands). Jesus provides a message for each of the seven churches. John will see a similar representation starting in Revelation 4. Jesus is seen (Rev. 5:6). He is seen in the holy place of heaven’s sanctuary (the table of the bread of His presence – Rev. 4:2, 5). Jesus unseals the scroll with seven seals revealing important messages for His church.

What is the significance of this? Several things. First and foremost, Jesus presents Himself to His people as the one who care for them, the one who is deeply interested in them, the one who knows the future, the who alone can save them.

Second, the place we find Jesus provides a staring point for the timeline prophecy. Which room of the sanctuary did the priest first minister the victims blood that shed at the hand of the repentant sinner? When Jesus ascended to the Father after His resurrection, where did He go to first minister His blood on our behalf? The same room—the Holy Place. So when we see Jesus in the Holy Place we know that we have a starting point for the timeline prophecy—soon after Jesus’ ascension to heaven.

Finally, the similarities between the seven churches and seven seals speak to a parallel prophetic time period that begins in John’s day and closes at or prior to the return of Jesus. What we find in the seven seals will be a repeat and an enlargement of what we know about the seven churches.

## Sunday – In The Heavenly Throne Room

Revelation 4:1-11

**Revelation 4:1-11.** What John sees here is absolutely stunning. It's an incredible view of heaven's throne room. God provides an inside look at the "control center" of the universe, and provides a sneak peak into the operations of that grand and glorious center. We are not given a view of inside the Oval Office, or of Queen Elizabeth II's throne room inside Buckingham Palace. What we are given the privilege of seeing is a portrayal of the Monarch of the universe seated on His throne in heaven's throne room in splendor and absolute glory!

V. 1 – "After these things". What John is invited to see via vision is not what was to take place after the fulfillment of everything recorded in the previous three chapters. The expression "after these things" simply means that after what John had previously seen and heard he is now given a new scene and a new vision which is about to introduce.

What John sees is not a door open *to* heaven, as if he were outside of heaven looking in. John sees a door open *in* heaven, as if he sees into heaven and within heaven he sees a door open. And this door opens to the throne room of God. That this door is the door to heaven's sanctuary will become apparent.

The voice of a trumpet that John hears inviting him up to see is none other than the voice of Christ (see Rev. 1:10, 11). Christ is inviting John up to see things that will take place "after this." The great object of Revelation is the revealing of future events designed to inform, edify, and comfort God's people (see Rev. 1:1).

V. 2, 3 – "One sat on the throne". John is caught away in vision and is privileged to see what not too many have seen—God seated on His throne. John doesn't record much about the Being seated on His throne. One author describes it as "reverent reticence". Can we any one of properly portray in human terms such an august personage? So John avoids speaking in terms that lessen the majesty of the "One" he sees seated there.

The Father's appearance is that of jasper, a stone, described by the ancient naturalist, Pliny, as translucent. Translucent allows light, but not detailed images, to pass through. In this instant, the jasper probably describes a bright light more notable for its brilliance than its color. Add to that the reddish color of the sardius or carnelian stone emitting a vivid light, and the emerald green of the rainbow circling the throne, and we can only begin to imagine the dazzling glory John witnessed of the One seated upon His throne.

V. 4, 5 – "Seven lamps...before the throne". Around the throne and seated on their thrones are 24 elders. And proceeding from the throne is a demonstration of power and majesty as lightening lights up the throne room accompanied by the clap of thunder and "voices." We see this expression used several times by John in

Revelation (see Rev. 8:5, 11:19; 16:18) attached to other significant events. We first read about this portrayal of God's magnificent presence in Ex. 20:18 after He declares the Ten Commandments from the top of Mt. Sinai.

Notice that the throne is "before" the seven lamps of fire". This is referring to the seven golden lampstands of Revelation 1, which were found in the Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary. Where then is God's throne if it is "before" the lamps?

When reading about the details of the earthly sanctuary (the miniature and replica of heaven's), we learn that the table of showbread is before or across from the candelabra. The table of showbread is also known as the table of the bread of His presence (see Ex. 25:30 – "And you shall set the showbread on the table before Me always.").

It is often thought that God's throne exists only in the Most Holy Place only. After all, that's where His presence was often found, resting over the mercy seat. But God's presence was also found in the Holy Place (see Ex. 33:9; Ezek. 9:3). So when John sees God's throne it is located in the Holy Place "before" the seven lamps. God's throne get's around! Remember in Ezekiel's vision God's throne has wheels! (see Ezek. 1:15-28)

V. 6 – "Sea of glass". And before the throne was a sea of glass, like crystal—something transparent-like, ice. This description is very similar to Ezekiel's (Ezek. 1:26). What John saw was a "vast shimmering expanse, gloriously reflecting the red and green radiance about the throne." We read about this sea again in Rev. 15:2 where the overcomers stand in their ecstatic joy. They are not there now, but they will be then!

V. 6-11 – "They rest not" (v. 8). When reading this verse, John Wesley exclaimed, "O happy unrest!" The theme of the four living creatures worship is "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." And they sing the refrain "day and night." I'm sure more is said, but they never tire of repeating these words. Why? They never tire because their hearts burn brighter and brighter with a deepening sense of God's holiness, His goodness, and His love. And our praise won't ever feel monotonous if with every strain of praise we gain a new view of the attributes of the Almighty.

What is the difference between giving thanks and praise? Someone said, "Praise is much deeper than just thanking someone. After a meal I can thank my wife for fixing the dinner and take up the newspaper again. That is expressing thanks. Or I can grab her when she is not looking, squeeze her tight, and say, 'Honey, that was a delicious meal! You are an absolutely wonderful cook! You sit down, and let me clean up the dishes.' That is praise!" Let us give God more praise. What do you say?

## Monday – The Heavenly Assembly In The Throne Room

Revelation 4:4, 6-8; 5:8-10; Psalm 34:7

**Revelation 4:4; 5:8.** The number twenty-four brings to mind the twenty-four orders or courses into which the priests were organized by King David. They consisted of the children of Ithamar and Eleazer, the remaining two sons of Aaron. 1 Chronicles 24 tells the story (see vv. 4, 18). Like the ancient priests, these heavenly elders were represented by John as holding censers and as offering incense when people pray.

There are two main views about the identity of these elders:

1. Like the author of this lesson, many believe that the twenty-four elders represent some of the redeemed from the earth. They wear white robes (like the great multitude do in Rev. 7:13, 14) and crowns of gold on their heads symbolic of the victory they have obtained by grace (Rev. 2:10). Add to this the new song they sing in Rev. 5:9, 10 where they appear to claim that they were redeemed by Christ's blood, along with evidence that Christ took trophies of resurrected believers back to heaven with Him (see Matt. 27:52, 53; Eph. 4:8) and it's easy to see why this teaching is popular.
2. The SDA Bible Commentary and many others, teach that the twenty-four elders are not redeemed individuals as the word "us" in Rev. 5:9, 10 in the KJV or NKJV should read instead, "men" and "them" as Greek manuscripts of Revelation overwhelmingly support the scholar's conclusions. And that would make sense, because how could the four living creatures (angels) who sing with the twenty-four elders claim to have been redeemed by Christ's precious blood when they have never fallen and do not need its cleansing benefits? Also, how could mere men be given the task of ministering the prayers of the saints (see Rev. 5:8)?

Whatever the conclusion, I like what one author penned: "[E]ven if the twenty-four elders are not necessarily human, they are nonetheless our friends. They assist us in prayer. John saw them symbolically offering incense as we pray. We should be grateful for every one of them."

**Revelation 4:6-8.** These "living creatures" are none other than angelic beings ministering before God's throne. Isaiah called them seraphim having six wings (Isa. 6). Ezekiel saw them in vision too. In Ezek. 10 he called them cherubim having four wings and the appearance of four heads—a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle—and each was close to the throne of God and associated with a wheel that seemed full of eyes. John thought he saw six wings on the angels, and perceived each had one face, unlike Ezekiel. He also noticed no wheels full of eyes, but the angels themselves were full of eyes.

The shape of the living creatures is very likely symbolic. The human face symbolized their intelligence; the lion's face, their strength; the ox's, their willingness to be of service; and the eagle's, their swiftness to do God's will.

We would all feel better if we gave more consistent thought to what angels do for us. Jacob saw angels ascending and descending between heaven and earth (Gen. 28:12). Angels brought food to Elijah (1 Kings 19:5), destroyed an entire army (2 Kings 19:35), and saved Daniel from hungry lions (Dan. 6:22). An angel promised a baby boy to Zacharias (Luke 1:13). Angels sang when Jesus was born (Luke 2:13); encouraged Him at the end of the temptations in the wilderness (Matt. 4:11), ministered to him in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:43), and rolled away the stone from His tomb (Matt. 28:3). They opened prison doors for Peter (Acts 5:19) and stood by Paul during a storm at sea (Acts 27:23). They also encouraged non-Christians in Bible times to ask about the gospel (Acts 10:1-7). Angels still accompany us today:

**Psalm 34:7:** "The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them."

## Tuesday – The Sealed Scroll

Revelation 5:1-7

**Revelation 5:1-4.** The books in use at the time Revelation was written was not written in the form of a bound book like ours today, but consisted of strips of parchment rolled up. What is in the hand of Him who sits on the throne is of utmost importance.

According to Ellen White, the scroll contains *"the history of God's providences, the prophetic history of nations and the church. Herein was contained the divine utterances, His authority, His commandments, His laws, the whole symbolic counsel of the Eternal, and the history of all ruling powers in the nations. In symbolic language was contained in that roll the influence of every nation, tongue, and people from the beginning of earth's history to its close."* (Manuscript Releases, vol. 9, p. 7)

And according to Christ's Object Lessons, p. 294 we are told that the decision of the Jewish rulers to reject Christ *"was registered in the book which John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, the book which no man could open. In all its vindictiveness this decision will appear before them in the day when this book is unsealed by the Lion of the tribe of Judah."*

A strong angel utters a challenge to all beings in the universe to try the strength of their wisdom to understand all the counsels of God. Who could be found worthy to unseal the scroll? The ensuing silence from the universe testifies to their acknowledged inability and unworthiness to enter into the counsels of the Creator.

In response to this, John weeps. “The Revelation was not written without tears; neither without tears will it be understood.”

**Revelation 5:5-7.** But John wasn’t permitted to weep long because an announcement was soon made that there was One who had proven worthy to open the scroll.

V. 5 – “Lion...has prevailed”. The figure of a lion signifies strength (Rev. 9:8, 17; 10:3; 13:2, 5), and Christ has won the victory in the great controversy with Satan, which is the basis of His right to open the scroll. An angel couldn’t have done what Christ did. The vindication of God’s character could only have come from one who was one with God who had made Himself man.

V. 6, 7 – “A lamb”. John has just heard Christ called a lion and thus a conqueror, but when he looks, he sees a lamb as if it had been slain. What a contrast! It has been suggested that this contrast may speak eloquently to the fact that Christ’s victory was not one of force but of moral excellence. It is the vicarious sacrifice of His sinless life, symbolized by a spotless lamb, rather than a demonstration of force, that has gained for Christ the victory.

Christ alone is worthy, not because we esteemed Him so, but because God esteemed Him so; because He won back what was lost, conquering sin and the grave. Who else would be considered worthy?

### **Wednesday – Worthy Is The Lamb**

Revelation 5:8-14; Ephesians 1:20-23

**Revelation 5:8-14.** The act of Christ taking the scroll out of the Father’s hand reveals that all authority belongs to Him. In taking the scroll that carries the destiny of the world in its pages, Christ is taking into His charge and care each of our destinies. He who holds the rise and fall of nations in His hand, has the power to hold each one of us up. He is declaring that He has the right to your life, but He doesn’t demand being your Lord, He points to Calvary to prove His worthiness.

Those hands that were pierced for us and that took a hold of that scroll, wants so desperately to take a hold of your hand so He can provide the best for you and eternal hope—the hope of a better tomorrow, life without end.

**Ephesians 1:20-23:** “Which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

## Thursday – The Significance Of Pentecost

Daniel 7:9-14; Revelation 4 & 5; Acts 2:32-36

Do Revelation 4 and 5 and Daniel 7:9-14 both describe the judgment? There are some similarities when the two passages are compared: Both refer to God's throne. Both refer to additional thrones. Both refer to a vast number of angels. Both talk about a book or books. Both describe a subsequent appearance of Jesus.

But there are some very significant differences between the passages that when reviewed show that they are actually referring to different scenes:

1. Dan. 7 begins with the setting up thrones in a new location with God taking His seat on one of them. Rev. 4 & 5 begins with God already seated on His throne.
2. Dan. 7 portrays a dramatic arrive of Jesus on the clouds of heaven. In Rev. 4 & 5, John simply becomes aware that the Lamb is already present.
3. In Dan. 7 the books are said to be already open before the Son of makes His appearance. Rev. 4 & 5 the book is sealed with seven seals until the Lamb steps forward to open it.
4. Dan. 7 definitely presents a judgment scene (see vv. 10, 22, 26). Rev. 4 & 5 no judgment is mentioned or even hinted at.

We could also mention that heaven's judgment scene in Dan. 7 takes place in the Most Holy Place, which began in 1844 (ref. Dan. 8:14). Whereas, the scene of Rev. 4 & 5 occurs in the Holy Place (see Rev. 4:5). It was to this place Christ ascended after His resurrection to be inaugurated into his post-Calvary ministry as High Priest and King.

**Acts 2:32, 33, 36:** " "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear...Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.' "

*"The Pentecostal outpouring was Heaven's communication that the Redeemer's inauguration was accomplished."* (Acts of the Apostles, p. 38)

Truly Christ had been given all power, glory, honor, riches, wisdom, and blessings. And through this new position as our Mediator, He would gladly bestow by the Holy Spirit to His church, all that we would need to reflect His goodness and share the everlasting gospel with a perishing world. Have we availed ourselves of this magnificent power? Do we know what Christ's intercession on our behalf means?