

INTRODUCTION

The book of Revelation is not difficult. It is not mystery. It’s the only book in the Bible that promises a special blessing to those who read it, hear it and study it. The book of Revelation is divided very simply into three separate parts: Past tense, present tense and future tense. Are you ready to meet the Lord? You had better be because there is nothing else in God’s prophetic calendar that needs to be fulfilled for Jesus Christ to come back and rapture the church.

I have a pastor friend who talks about his grandmother. She was one of those great, godly women who shone with the presence of the Holy Spirit. She lived during the Depression and was always feeding what they used to call “panhandlers,” because there was a railroad near her home. When a panhandler came to her door, she never turned him away. She always told them about the Lord and then she always fed them lunch if they were hungry. He loves to tell the story about the time some old panhandler came to her door and asked for some food. She invited him in and he sat down there at the dinner table. She got out some ham they had cooked over the weekend and started cutting some pieces for him. Suddenly, she remembered, “I’ve not talked to him about the Lord yet.” She whirled around and confronted him right into his face and said, “Sir, are you ready to meet the Lord?” and it scared him so much he knocked his chair over, ran straight through the screen door and went off running down the railroad tracks. She said to her husband, “What got into him?” He said, “Honey, look you’re holding that butcher knife in your hand.”

In chapter 5:1-2, John says, “Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?’”

I. THE REVELATION OF THE BOOK

A. The characteristics

I want to say two things about this scroll. First, notice the characteristics. It is literally a scroll with seven seals. When we think of a book, we think of a book like this with a binding on the end, but books with binding did not exist until about the third century after Jesus. In fact, Christian preachers took Old Testament scrolls and tied them together on the ends, they were the forerunners of our books. They used scrolls in biblical days. Some of you have been to Jerusalem to the Museum of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Around the walls of that museum is a single, continuous scroll of the book of Isaiah, 44 feet long. Sometimes they rolled a scroll up in a scroll. This is what John saw in heaven.

It was a rolled up scroll with seven seals on the top. We don’t know exactly what those seals looked like, but when you opened the scroll and broke the first seal, you unwound the first section. The Bible says, there was writing on the outside and on the inside so, after the first seal was broken, what was on it was read. Many Bible scholars believe one side of the scroll pictured what’s happening in heaven while the other side of the scroll pictured what’s happening on earth. The different seals will be broken. What is written thereon will be shared. You can see how it would happen. It was rolled up as one scroll the first seal was broken and the first page could be read. Then, when the second seal was broken, the second page could be read. That’s how the

seven seals are contained in that scroll. Back in biblical times, they mashed reeds to create papyrus, a form of paper. We believe that’s what the scroll is made of. So, that’s what John saw in heaven. As he was there with all the redeemed of all the ages, there was a scroll with seven seals on it, the angel asked, “Is there anyone here who is worthy to take this book (this scroll) and open the seals?”

B. The contents

Next look at the contents. What was in this scroll? What was written on it? What does this scroll represent? This is something that will bless your heart if you stick with me a little bit, but you have to understand a little Old Testament history. This scroll represents our forfeited inheritance. It’s what God originally intended for Adam and Eve and for you and for me. But we forfeited that inheritance because of sin. Here’s a very important key: Only a legal kinsman in the Bible it’s called in the Hebrew a *go’el*, literally “a redeemer/kinsman” can buy it back. It has to be a member of the family who can pay the full price.

Many of you are familiar with the book of Ruth in the Old Testament. It’s the story of a woman, Naomi, who moves to a foreign land. Her husband and two sons have died, leaving Naomi and her two daughters-in-law alone. One of the daughters-in-law goes back, but Ruth stays with Naomi and eventually they move back to their homeland. Here’s their problem. There is a piece of property, which was originally in Naomi’s family, but Naomi cannot buy it back because it has to be a male redeemer kinsman. Ruth cannot buy it back because she’s a woman as well. So they need someone who can buy it back for them as a legal kinsman and this is a real problem to them.

Let me tell you something about Hebrew real estate. To the ancient Jewish people and even the forerunners of the Jews, a piece of property always stayed in a family. A family never sold it or gave away the title to that property. But if that family fell on hard times and someone had to give up the land because there were debts they could not pay, another family might take it over, but what we would call the “Title Deed” of that property was always preserved and at any time in the future, no matter how many generations afterwards, a true kinsman—a true relative—of the original owner could come to whomever was controlling the property at the time. If he could prove he was a legal kinsman, he could buy the property back at whatever price it was sold for originally. In other words if you bought property from somebody who was not in your family, you always stood the risk of having a legal kinsman coming back and claiming their right to it. The deed was always contained in some kind of a sealed document like this. Only a legal kinsman who could pay the full price could come, claim it and redeem the property.”

In the story of Ruth that’s exactly what happened. A fine-looking man named Boaz came on the scene. Ruth started noticing Boaz and Boaz started noticing Ruth. Of course, Naomi did what a lot of women like to do—she played matchmaker. She told Ruth where Boaz would be and told her to get all cleaned up, fix her hair, put on fresh makeup and go down there and put some moves on him. (That’s a loose translation) So ladies you ought to read the book of Ruth. This is how she caught him. She went and slept at his feet all night. Ladies, try that sometime. Boaz was so honored by that. He was not the first in line as the legal kinsman. There was another one and they wanted this property. If you read the book of Ruth, you’ll see Boaz went up the man who was number one in line, the closest relative, and he said, “Do you want to buy that property that

belonged to Naomi's husband's family?" The guy said, "Yeah, I think I do." He said, "There's only one thing. If you get the property, you get Ruth also. You have to take the woman with the property." I kind of like the tactful way this guy answers. He says, "I can't do that. It would kind of mess up my family." Probably meaning, "I already have a wife and she wouldn't dare let me get another one." So he says, "All right. I give up my claim." Then Boaz says, "I claim my rights as the legal kinsman." He marries Ruth and takes the scroll because he is the *go'el*, the legal redeemer kinsman.

Having said all of that, that's what's happening in Revelation chapter 5. "Who is a redeemer kinsmen? Who is worthy to redeem what mankind forfeited when they sinned?" You and I know Jesus is the only one who can do that. That's why we sing, "Redeemed, redeemed, redeemed. Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. I've been redeemed!" "Redeemed" means "I have been bought back!" You say, "But wait a minute, Brother David. Aren't you talking about the future here?" Yes. "But I thought we sing in the past tense, 'I have been redeemed.'" That's true. In a real sense we have already been redeemed. Jesus has already paid the price on Calvary but yet he has not yet claimed the scroll. Why do you think the when the Bible speaks of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ "Lift up your eyes upon the eastern skies for your redemption draws nigh?" That's future tense. In a real sense our redemption has not been *completed* until Jesus takes the book. So, that number one is the revealing of the book. It is a scroll with seven seals and is the title deed to what God intended for mankind—our redemption.

II. THE REACTIONS TOWARD THE BOOK

Number two; notice the reactions toward the book/scroll. "But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it." John says, "I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Then one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.'"

A. A futile search

First of all there was a futile search. The Bible says they looked in heaven and they looked on earth and they look under the earth and they said, "Who is worthy? Is anyone worthy to pay the price that can prove his relationship to the original owner to come and claim the book? The Bible says no one was able. "Mohammed come and take the scroll." He couldn't do it. "Buddha come and take the scroll." He can't do it. "Confucius, come and take the scroll." "Sun Myung Moon..." Even those who tried to work out their own personal self-made religion. "Come and take the scroll" and the Bible says none of them were able to do it. There was a futile search in heaven. John said, "Nobody in heaven could do it. Nobody on the earth left behind after the rapture could do it, nobody even under the earth (hell) could do it. Nobody.

B. A fearful sorrow

That leads to the second reaction—a fearful sadness. Did you expect to see tears in heaven? Has anybody ever told you there won't be any tears in heaven? That's not what the Bible says. The Bible says, "There will come a time when he will wipe away all the tears." Then, later on in the New Jerusalem, "there will be no more crying, neither sadness nor sorrow." But here is John

weeping in heaven. The word there for weeping is a strong word which means his body was wracked with sobs. Why? Because he said, “Here it is. Here is mankind’s redemption and there is nobody able to come and take it and redeem it.” And so he cried. His tears represent all the tears of sinful man throughout history. Tears never started until sin entered the world. They represent the tears of Adam and Eve as they were driven out of Paradise. They represent the tears of Adam and Eve as they stood there over the grave of their son, Abel. They represent the tears of the Israelites as they were down in Egypt making bricks from straw. They represent the tears of all the people through the ages as they watch their loved ones suffer and die. They represent all the tears of everyone. As those tears were flowing out of his face, the angel says, “Don’t cry anymore. You don’t have to worry. There IS someone who is worthy.”

III. THE RECIPIENT OF THE BOOK

Look at the recipient of the book. John says, “Then I saw a Lamb,” and notice what it says back in verse 5 he says, “See the Lion of the tribe of Judah.” We see the Lion that became a Lamb. The lion is the king of all beasts the king of kings. The Root of David means he comes out of the family of David. “He has triumphed.” Then John says, “I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.” (God the Father) “And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.”

A. The lamb revealed

First, notice the Lamb revealed. It’s interesting the Bible says the one on the throne is God the Father God Almighty. It seems as if in chapter 4 and 5 the Lord Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God is standing in the edges of the stage. It’s not until this point he dramatically walks forward and takes the scroll that the Lamb is revealed. How do we know this is the Lord Jesus? Because the Bible calls him the Lamb of God; He’s the one who is slain and Jesus was slain for our sins and he is the one who was dead but is now alive forevermore.

1. Standing

Let me give you three words here under the Lamb revealed that describe Jesus in this picture in Revelation. First, he is “looking as if he had been slain.” This was a ceremonial word for when they took the lamb on the day of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. The High Priest took a curved, sharp, razor-like blade and slit the throat of the lamb, and blood poured out on the altar. That’s rather gross to think about, isn’t it? I heard of an old country pastor who wanted to show his people how dramatic that was, so he killed a lamb right on the communion table of this little Baptist church. It caused such uproar in that little community; they ended up running him off. I’d never do anything like that, because it is so awful to think about—and the good news is we don’t have to keep killing lambs anymore! There were thousands and thousands of lambs and rams and animals killed before Jesus died on the cross and the Bible says in Hebrews it never cleansed one

sin, but the death of Jesus cleanses us of all our sins. So this is a picture of a lamb that is slain ceremonially.

2. Slain

The second word seems to be a paradox, something that seems a little unusual. Not only was he slain but he was standing. You would expect a slain sacrifice to be fallen down, but this shows the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world is alive and well and standing.

3. Strong

Then, the third describing the Lamb is the word strong. So the Lamb revealed as slain is standing *and* strong. How did we know? "He had seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth." Don't be afraid of the beautiful symbolism in the book of Revelation. Trying to visualize Jesus, the Lamb of God with seven horns and seven eyes will make you feel like you've been eating ice cream and sour cabbage and then going for a ride on a roller coaster and having some kind of a nightmare. I have told you this is all symbolic. What's significant? It is the number seven, which in Jewish Gematria, the use of numbers, means perfection. So what does this mean? The horn was a sign of strength, so when it says he had seven horns that means he was perfect in strength and power. The Lord Jesus has all the strength you need. He has all the strength I need. He is able to deliver. Then when it says he has seven eyes the Bible says that is a picture a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The seven spirits represent the one perfect Holy Spirit of God. So here we see this picture of the Lamb standing there taking this scroll. It is a picture of the Lord Jesus saying, "I am the one!" because he has paid the price, he died on Calvary and he is the son of the living God. He is the *only* one who is the *go'el* and who can take this scroll, which is our redemption and buy it back.

B. The lamb revered

1. Praised by the four creatures, the angels and the elders

Notice the Lamb is worshiped, revered. I want you to see who's in heaven because you and I are there. "And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb." The twenty-four elders represent us—all the redeemed of all the ages. Every time you see twenty-four elders, substitute the pronoun "us." At that moment, the Bible says we're going to fall down before the Lamb and begin to worship him.

What is it going to be like in heaven? "Each one had a harp." For those men who say your wife is always harping, well she's just getting ready to go to heaven, because the Bible says we're all going to have a harp. I don't know how we're going to play it because it also says we'll be "holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." I don't know how we're going to play the harp and hold the bowl of incense, which are our prayers that have been stored up. Someone said it could be that all the different harps will only have one string and one note and when you just pluck your note, it will be a beautiful symphony of praise. That may be but here again, this is probably symbolic of how all the prayers you have ever prayed are being stored up in heaven and the Bible says these prayers are like incense. It is a sweet smelling

The truth of the matter is the Bible never gives an exact number of angels, but it seems by this time in the future, the angels are no longer on the earth ministering to the saints, because there are no saints on the earth. We’ve all been caught up to heaven. So, not only are we there worshiping the Lamb, but the angels are there worshiping the Lamb. Keep reading in verse 11 “They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.” So here’s the picture. Here’s the throne in the center with God Almighty on it and here’s the Lamb of God. Then, there are the four living creatures circling the throne and then there are all the saints of God circling the throne. Then the Bible says there are all the angels so many you cannot even number them circling the throne and they began to praise “in a loud voice they sang” The NIV uses the word “sang,” but really in the Greek it is the word they spoke they shouted it is the word *lego*.

I don’t know why they used the word “sang” here, the Living Bible also translates it as “sang” but it’s a totally different word than the word used in verse 9. In verse 9 it is the word for sing “They sang” That’s us. We sang a new song but the word there in verse 12 is *lego*, which means they shouted. Whether they sang or they shouted, this is what they began to do in their praise: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”

2. The Doxologies build

That’s what the angels did. Here’s the picture. The four living creatures all the saints surround the throne and we begin to sing that first new song to the Lamb. Then, this innumerable host of angels around the outside and they respond with “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise.”

The praise continues to mount. Do you see how it is getting greater and greater? This group sings, then shouts praise and then there is one final pinnacle of praise beginning in verse 13. “Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea and all that is in them” It is the word *lego* “shouting (this is all of us) to him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power for ever and ever!”

Some of our men went to Promise Keepers recently in Denver, Colorado. There were 50,000 men in the stadium in Boulder, Colorado, totally sold out to Jesus Christ, and they sang praises solid for about 45 minutes. Those men came back and they said, “It’s the closest thing to heaven I’ve ever seen.” That is absolutely *nothing* compared to what it’s going to be like when we get into heaven! We’re going to be shouting and singing praises. If you think you are going to go to heaven and sit in some corner and be nice and quiet and inactive, get ready—it’s going to be a great festival of praise! The Bible says elsewhere in the book of Revelation “it is going to sound like the sound of many waters.” It is going to be a virtual Niagara Falls of praise and worship to the Lamb. Start praising the Lord down here or you’re going to be absolutely out of place up there.

Finally in verse 14, after this threefold pinnacle of praise, first the creatures and the saints then the angels and then all the creatures, the four living creatures said, “Amen.” Then, the elders fell down and worshiped. Isn’t that beautiful? If the President of the United States walked in here, we would stand up, but if Jesus Christ walked in here, we would fall down. Get ready, because when

we get to heaven, we’re going to be falling at the feet of the Lamb, because he is the only one who is worthy to take back what was once ours. You might have sung for many years, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.” You didn’t even know what he was worthy to do. He’s worthy as the Son of God who could pay the price of his own blood to buy back those of us who were lost.

Who’s going to be in heaven doing that? I tell you all those who are saved at the rapture of the church. You say, “What if I’m not a Christian and Jesus comes back to rapture the church? Where will I be?” We start that next week in chapter 6, because as these seals start being opened and God’s judgement starts getting poured out on the earth it will be a terrible time of Tribulation. So, as I have said many, many times before and I continue to say to you: You do not want to be here during the time of Tribulation!

OUTLINE

I. The Revelation of the Book (vs. 1-2)

- A. The characteristics—A scroll with seven seals—a code
- B. The contents: The scroll represents our forfeited inheritance. (Sin caused us to lose it) Only a legal kinsman (*go’el*) can buy it back.

II. The Reactions toward the Book (vs. 3-5)

- A. A futile search (v. 3)
- B. A fearful sorrow (v. 4)

III. The Recipient of the Book (vs. 6-14)

- A. The Lamb revealed
 - 1. Slain
 - 2. Standing
 - 3. Strong
- B. The Lamb revered
 - 1. Praised by the four creatures, the angels and the elders
 - 2. The Doxologies build



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes