**“WHO IS WORTHY TO OPEN THE SCROLL?”**

**REVELATION CHAPTER 5**

In Chapter 4 John is ushered through the portals of heaven and sees One seated on a throne. We said that this was God – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, the holy Trinity, the three in One. Around God’s majestic throne John observed the 24 elders, representative of both Old Testament and New Testament saints, worshipping God with the angelic host of heaven. Together they sang, “Worthy art Thou our Lord to receive glory and honor and power…”

Chapter 5 is a seamless continuation of Chapter 4 so the scene is the same, taking place in the glory of heaven. As the celestial choir is praising God, John describes what he sees next…

1 Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

God holds in His right hand a book or, more appropriately, a scroll. It has writing on both sides and is sealed with seven seals. What does that mean? Well, in Roman law a legal document was sealed with seven seals. When it came time to transact the business contained in the document, an authorized executor would take the document, break its seals and read its contents. It had to be somebody who had the legal authority to carry out the directives of the document’s contents.

Before we proceed further it is important that we establish what this document is. This is God’s deed and title to the world. You may say, “Hey, wait just a minute. I thought that God already owned it all!” Yes, but for a time He turned over control to Satan, which is why Jesus refers to him as the “prince” or the “ruler” of this world (John 12:31, 14:30 and 16:11).

When Satan was kicked out of heaven God did not destroy him, but instead banished him to earth to dwell. Satan, angry with God, subsequently sought ways to ruin God’s perfect creation and he did a pretty good job. Satan got Adam to sin, which got Adam and Eve kicked out of the Garden of Eden and it was all downhill from there. Adam’s sin caused the whole human race to fall spiritually. It brought about physical decay, sickness and death upon all men as well as the rest of God’s creation. Later because of what Christ accomplished at Calvary, God was able to defeat Satan and provide a way for man to be redeemed spiritually and to have eternal life. Creation, however, continues to suffer as a result of original sin. Creation longs to be redeemed (Romans 8:19-23). That is all about to change for God is about to take back possession of it. God holds the deed to the earth in His right hand and the call goes out to find one who is authorized to claim it…

2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?"

3 And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it,

“Worthy” means “adequately prepared.” The summons goes forth throughout heaven to find that worthy king to take the scroll, open it and take permanent possession of it. Just think about something – in heaven at this time are all the great saints of all time, wonderful godly people like Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Solomon, Elijah, Jeremiah, Daniel, James, John, Peter, Paul, William Tyndale, Martin Luther, Charles Spurgeon, Dwight L. Moody, W.A. Criswell, Billy Graham, and Mother Teresa. Not one of these, however, is deemed worthy. Not one of the angels, not even Gabriel or Michael is deemed worthy either. John’s reaction to this is in the next verse…

4 and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.

John is overcome with sorrow and begins to weep. Ah, but then…

5 And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

But one of the elders said, “Don’t cry, there IS one who is worthy.” Who is that person? The one who is worthy will come from the tribe of Judah, the lion tribe of Genesis 49:9. The one who is worthy is a “Root of David” prophesied about in Isaiah 11:1. The one who is worthy has conquered. So who is it? I want you to know it is none other than Jesus Christ Himself! Jesus is from the tribe of Judah and He descended from David’s royal line. He is the Messiah that Isaiah prophesied about in Isaiah 11. He is also the one who overcame. Jesus said this about Himself in Revelation 3:21 (one of the last words He spoke to His church): “I also overcame and sat down with My Father on the throne.” So, clearly, Jesus is the One who is worthy to open the scroll and the seven seals!

6 And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

John looks over at the throne of God that is surrounded by the elders and the four living creatures and who does he see but Jesus. Notice that His appearance is a Lamb. Remember how John the Baptist described Jesus? He said, “Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) Jesus is standing alive, but with the marks from His death on the cross visible. When Jesus appeared to the disciples, including John, right after His resurrection He was in His glorified body. In that resurrected body Jesus bore the marks of a brutal death on the cross as a reminder of what He had done for them (see John 20:20, 27).

The seven horns indicate His perfect and complete power and authority as King. Jesus said of Himself, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” (Matthew 28:18) The seven eyes are identified here as the seven Spirits of God. Here is a reference to the Holy Spirit who was sent by Jesus Christ into the world to empower believers after He departed and went back to glory (see John 16:7 and Acts 1:8). Eyes are symbolic of an all-knowing God.

7 And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.

Jesus takes the scroll out of God the Father’s right hand. He alone is worthy! This causes all heaven to break forth in song…

8 And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

9 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,

10 and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

11 Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands,

12 saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

13 And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!"

14 And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Millions possibly billions of all the saved men and women of all time and the angelic hosts make up heaven’s incredible choir, “myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands…” In other words, too many to count. In fact it is so many that the number cannot even be imagined. They sing a new song. They proclaim why only the Lamb, Jesus Christ is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll and reclaim God’s creation. Because with His own blood He purchased, He redeemed, people from every nation. He is worthy because of what He did on Calvary’s cross!

Their song is a song of rejoicing. Their song is a song of happiness and joy. The saints gather around the throne and sing praises and adore the One who redeemed them from Satan’s curse. “Worthy is the Lamb!”

“Therefore also God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven [the saints and the angels as seen here in Chapters 4 and 5], and on earth [those who were left behind, the unsaved], and under the earth [a reference to the underworld – Satan and his demons], and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9-11)

God is going to redeem creation one day and when He does every created thing will worship Him. You WILL worship Jesus and you WILL acknowledge Him as Lord. You can either do it voluntarily of your own free will now while there is time or you will be forced to do it later when it is too late.

Well we’ve been looking at the heavenly side of the picture and now we are going to switch perspectives. For the next several chapters our focus will be turned back to the earth. It’s as though we have been flying above the clouds in the bright sunlight and now we descend through the dark clouds of doom back to the earth in Chapter 6. The same Lord and Redeemer who has been the object of worship by the saints will be the righteous Judge of the wicked earth.

Today is the day of grace. Those who hear and respond to God’s divine invitation of salvation are the overcomers and have the promise of blessing throughout eternity and will be delivered from the terrible events of the Tribulation period. The Scripture reminds us that “Behold now is the acceptable time, behold now is the day of salvation.” (2 Corinthians 6:2)