

# The Grace of Wrath

Studies in the Revelation of Jesus Christ

Text

Chapter 5:1-14

Topic

The call goes out in Heaven for the only One worthy to take the scroll from the right hand of God and finish history as it is pre-written

Title

*"Scroll Call"*

Introduction

*Sleepless in Seattle* poked a lot of fun at you gals for crying all the time while watching movies. It happened when Tom Hanks' character, Sam Baldwin, said to his friend, "I cried at the end of *The Dirty Dozen*."

The two went on to have a long, sarcastic conversation about how emotional they supposedly got over the various deaths portrayed in the film.

Maybe you're that kind of guy - one who doesn't cry.

What about the beginning of Pixar's movie, *Up*? Let me spoil it for you in case you've never seen it.

It's about a kid named Carl who falls in love with the little neighborhood tomboy girl, Ellie. The first few minutes shows how they go on these make believe adventures together, and start saving money for a real trip to beautiful Paradise Falls.

They marry, and as they age, life always gets in the way of their trip, and they use the money they've set aside for house repairs and car repairs and other everyday stuff.

Throughout this montage of their life flashing before our eyes, it shows how happy and in love they were, frolicking up hills together.

But it also shows this insanely sad stuff, like how Ellie couldn't have babies.

Then, out of nowhere, Ellie gets a terminal illness. She can't climb up those happy hills without Carl carrying her.

She dies, leaving Carl a bitter old man.

If you didn't cry at some point in those first ten minutes, you've probably been taken over by aliens.

I'm crying more than usual. Some of it is appropriate. But even I was surprised to find myself tearing-up at the end of the new *Cinderella*.

Whether you are a crier or not, weeping is appropriate an awful lot of the time here on planet earth. Too often.

Maybe that's why one of the things that really jumps out at us in Revelation five is John's weeping, and his being told to stop, and his weeping giving way to worship.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 The Current Era Of Weeping Will End When You See Jesus Take The Scroll, and #2 The Coming Era Of Worship Will Begin When You See Jesus Take The Scroll.

## #1 The Current Era Of Weeping Will End When You See Jesus Take The Scroll

(v1-7)

What I am calling 'the current era of weeping' was inaugurated when Adam and Eve sinned, bringing decay, disaster, and death into the world God had created. Their tempter, Satan, became the god of this world, the ruler of this world, and the prince of the power of the air.

Since the devil is a liar, a thief, and a murderer, the havoc he causes leads to almost unimaginable pain and suffering - represented by weeping.

As we follow John into Heaven, he will weep uncontrollably; but it will, in one sense, represent the end of weeping as we know it on account of what occurs next.

**Rev 5:1 And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.**

John, you remember from chapter four, had been transported to Heaven, and to the future. The Tribulation is just about to break upon the earth as a storm.

He saw God on His throne, and next his attention is drawn to a seven-sealed, double-sided scroll in God's right hand.

What is this scroll?

There are a lot of suggestions, but only two likely options. The first, very popular, is that the scroll is the title deed to planet earth.

The thinking is that Adam, who was given dominion over the earth, forfeited his rights to the planet when he sinned, but Jesus came to reclaim what was lost. God has been holding the deed, waiting for the redeemer to step forth.

There is some support for this in Jeremiah 32:6-15, which describes Jewish title deeds as sealed scrolls, and talks about forfeited land being properly redeemed.

The second option is that the scroll is the future history of the earth, and of mankind, written in advance. In fact, beginning with chapter six, the seals are opened, in order, revealing the Tribulation, followed by the Second Coming of Jesus to establish His one-thousand year Kingdom of Heaven on the earth.

It's a little of both, is it not? We see the pre-written future as the seals are opened, and they lead inevitably to the Lord totally reclaiming and redeeming what had been forfeited by Adam.

Rev 5:2 Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?"

Rev 5:3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.

God's law, given to Israel, specified that land could only be redeemed by a certain person. This person was called (in Hebrew) a *goel*. The translation into English is *kinsman-redeemer*.

He had to be a blood relative - kin - who was willing to act as the redeemer, and who was both willing and able to meet the conditions necessary to redeem the property.

If the land we are talking about is the earth itself then the kinsman-redeemer must meet the following conditions:

1. He would have to be a kinsman of Adam's. Since it is mankind's rights to the earth that were forfeited by Adam, only a relative of Adam's could be the redeemer. In plain language, he would have to be a human being.
2. **He would also have to be God!** Adam forfeited more than real estate. The souls of lost men and women have been forfeited and are included in the estate to be redeemed. No mere man who was born a sinner could ever qualify to be the kinsman-redeemer unless he were also God - born without sin and having lived a perfect, sinless life.
3. This person who was both God and man would then have to fulfill the obligations of the forfeiter. In the case of Adam, his obligation, in order to redeem the land, was to die. Thus Adam's kinsman-redeemer would have to offer himself willingly as a sacrifice and die in his place.

When the angel cries, "Who is worthy?," he isn't taking applications. It's not a job-posting.

He is announcing that none is worthy but One - the God-man, the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Rev 5:4 So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.

You're familiar with what writers and directors call the 'dramatic pause.' It's when a character waits to respond, giving the scene an even greater effect.

*God subjected John to the mother of all dramatic pauses.*

It gives us time to reflect on the uniqueness of our Savior, and to realize once again that no one can be saved apart from Jesus.

Rev 5:5 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."

We explained, in chapter four, why we believe the "elders" are the church, resurrected and raptured, safe in Heaven, prior to the opening of the seals and the Tribulation. I'll give you another solid proof they represent the church later in this chapter.

The elder tells John to stop weeping by pointing him to Jesus, Whom he described by two impressive titles: "the Lion of the Tribe of Judah," and "the Root of David."

These draw from prophecies in the Old Testament:

1. The messiah was to come from the Jewish tribe of Judah, represented in Scripture as a **lion** (Genesis 49:9-10).
2. Isaiah had prophesied (12:10) that the Messiah would be the **root** of David.

"Root" can mean *descendent*; but later in the Revelation (22:16) we learn Jesus is both the *root* and the *offspring* of David - meaning He is both ancestor and descendant.

How could the Messiah be both ancestor and descendant? Only if He were God Who became man.

John was told to stop weeping because there was One who had "prevailed."

*O, how He has prevailed.*

- He came from Heaven to earth in humiliation as God in human flesh.
- He overcame the trials of human life, the temptations in the wilderness, the agonies of the Garden of Gethsemane, the shame of the Cross at Calvary.
- He prevailed over the grave and rose from the dead.
- He descended into the lower parts of the earth so that when He ascended to Heaven He led with Him all those through the centuries who had believed in His coming.

Rev 5:6 And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

The Lion John expected to see... was a **Lamb**.

Jesus is referred to as the Lion only once in the Revelation. He is referred to as the Lamb about twenty-nine times. It is an incredibly important title and description.

Whenever I encounter the term I can't help but think of the theme of the lamb running all through Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation.

After Adam and Eve sinned, God clothed them with the skins of animals. He didn't get them from *Forever 21*. Those skins came from animals who were sacrificed on their behalf. It was a vivid illustration that the wages of sin is death.

We can't be certain, but I suggest those animals were lambs. One reason to think they were lambs is that Adam and Eve taught their sons about sacrifice; and when you see Abel sacrificing, he brought a lamb.

The patriarchs continued the practice. Then you see a massive sacrifice of lambs at the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt when God instituted the Passover. Estimates vary, but there were several million in the Exodus, making for a ton of households within which lambs were sacrificed.

It was an animal-activists worst nightmare.

Fast forward many centuries, and many hundreds of thousands (if not millions) of lambs slain in the Tabernacle, then the Temple. John the Baptist sees Jesus and declares, "Behold the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world!"

He meant to convey that Jesus was the final fulfillment of what had begun in the Garden of Eden. He was **THE** substitute and sacrifice for sin that every previous sacrificial lamb symbolized.



As we are fond of reminding you, Jesus died, on the Cross, just at the very moment the Passover lambs were being slain in the Temple.

"As though it had been slain" reminds you that Jesus bears in His eternal, glorified body the marks of His crucifixion. After the Lord rose from the dead He showed the nailprints to His disciples; and again later when Thomas was with them.

In the book of Zechariah we see that Israel will recognize Him by those same wounds when He returns at His Second Coming.

Why the scars? So important is the sacrificial offering of Christ in the sight of God that He is forever represented as being in the very act of pouring out his blood for the offenses of man.

Some people want to follow the teachings of Jesus as a great philosopher or religious leader. They like the 'red letters,' or so they say.

But that is not how Jesus is represented in Heaven and for eternity. He is represented as the sacrifice for our sins. You can't go there unless you receive His sacrifice on your behalf.

*Following His teachings is not even possible unless you are first born-again by believing in Him.*

"Having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth." Although we take the Revelation of Jesus Christ literally it doesn't mean it never uses figurative language.

Jesus does not have horns on His head. "Seven" is the number of completion. "Horns" are symbolic of authority. Jesus has full and complete and perfect authority.

And He doesn't have seven eyes. You're told that these represent the "seven Spirits of God" – which we've seen at least twice before in the Revelation is an Old Testament name for God the Holy Spirit.

These are symbols of omnipotence and omniscience. Even though He is the Lamb who was slain, you are not to pity Jesus. He is powerful.

"And seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth." On the Day of Pentecost the church received the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit, as He was sent by Jesus to empower His witnesses. The Spirit-filled church will be removed from the earth prior to the Tribulation. He will still be active on the earth as Jesus is said to send Him "into all the earth." The world will be totally evangelized during the Tribulation. Millions will be saved. Most of them will be martyred.

[Revelation 5:7](#) Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

The "right hand" is symbolic of authority and power to carry out authority. Taking the scroll indicates the moment in which power is conferred. It is a breathtaking moment. A mere seven years later Jesus will return and rule the earth for a thousand years.

Immediately following His reign over the earth the final judgment of nonbelievers will occur. Then a new Heaven and a new earth will be created in which we enjoy unbroken fellowship with God for eternity.

*We will be in Heaven to witness the moment.* Unlike John, we will not be weeping. We'll know what is happening having read about it.

John wept much. It means he sobbed convulsively.

When you think of the suffering that has occurred over the course of the centuries since Adam sinned it should make you want to sob convulsively. In His longsuffering, not willing that any should perish eternally, God has told His Son to wait.

Jesus is busy building His church. One day, and we believe it is imminent, the Father will send the Son to retrieve the church from the earth. Then this ceremony in Heaven will occur once-and-for-all as Jesus takes the scroll and opens its seals.

For believers, it will be the end of the era of weeping; no more tears. It's the Lord's 'no more tears formula' for them that love Him.

## #2 The Coming Era Of Worship Will Begin When You See Jesus Take The Scroll

(v8-14)

Notice verse nine, where it says, "they sang a new song." It will be "new" in terms of its being introduced at that moment.

But it will also mark the beginning of a new era of worship, in that this future moment is so incredibly unique. It is the beginning of the end leading to eternity. It's importance cannot be overstated.

Rev 5:8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

The "four living creatures" were introduced in chapter four. They are a variety of angel - maybe seraphim, maybe cherubim, but more likely something unique.

**We** are the "elders." Our attention is drawn to our equipment.

We each have a "harp." Yes, this is where we get the notion we will all be playing harps in Heaven. I'm not sure where the corresponding idea that we will be sitting on clouds comes from.

You might like this. According to *Vincent's Word Studies*,

...[the word for] harp signifies an instrument unlike our harp as ordinarily constructed. Rather a lute or **guitar**... Anciently of a triangular shape, with seven strings, afterwards increased to eleven. Josephus says it had ten, and was played with a plectrum or small piece of ivory.

It's a guitar jam - *and we will all be guitar heroes.*

We will also have "golden bowls of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."

In the Tabernacle and Temple on earth there was an altar upon which the priests would burn incense every morning and every evening. It stood just outside the holy of holies.

Psalm 141 was sung to accompany the burning of the incense in the evening sacrifice.

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

All the prayers of all God's saints, maybe from all time but certainly from the church age, are saved as a kind of incense to be burned at this incredible moment.

It's as if God is going to answer them all, right then, or at least as the seals are opened.

Jesus taught us to pray; and in what we call the Lord's prayer, we are to pray "Thy His kingdom come." This moment in Heaven is the fulfillment of those prayers; it is when His will WILL be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.

*Rev 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,*

*Rev 5:10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."*

This is sung by the "elders." Notice how they describe themselves. It further narrows exactly who they are, proving they are the church.

The description eliminates angels; angels are not redeemed by the blood of Jesus. Nor are they identified with tribes, tongues, peoples, and nations.

The description also seems to eliminate the nation of Israel, who are God's special, chosen nation. Jews would not be described as coming from these other people groups.

It is the church that is a kingdom of priests, who will rule and reign on the future earth with the Lord.

**Only saints from the church age can sing this song.** The twenty-four elders represent the church - believers from the Day of Pentecost until the rapture. They represent the church safe in Heaven prior to the seven-year Tribulation.

There, in Heaven, before the Throne, as the Lamb steps forward to begin opening the seals - a new era of worship begins.

Rev 5:11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,

Rev 5:12 saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

An innumerable company surrounds the Throne to worship Jesus. They praise Him as if His victory had already come. The seven years of Tribulation, and the one-thousand years of the Kingdom of Heaven, are certain to unfold exactly as written in the scroll, so Heaven and its occupants **can**, indeed, praise Him in advance.

Rev 5:13 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, 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!"

It all sounds very Narnian in terms of "creatures... on the earth and under the earth and... in the sea." There most definitely will be animals in Heaven. We know for sure there will be horses because Jesus returns from Heaven on one, and so do we.

Will they will have intelligence and the ability to converse? I don't see why not. Remember, Eve was not startled when a serpent was talking to her in the Garden of Eden.

And there was that episode in the Old Testament where Balaam's donkey started talking to him.

Rev 5:14 Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

Some of you have been to very formal events, that have lots of traditions, that follow a very definite order of service. They can be very moving; in fact, they are intended to incite strong emotions in you.

This "Amen" followed by falling down, probably in the Eastern tradition first to the knees, then all the way prostrate, brings to a fitting conclusion arguably the most moving scene in all the Bible. It ushers in a new era of worship.

There is a lot of weeping ahead of us, until God wipes away all tears, and our lives are all about the joy of worship.

One final comment. Weeping will end for us, but, for some, **it will never end.**

We read of the nonbelievers, eternally separated from God, that they will experience eternal "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:42 & 50).

Charles Spurgeon said of this,

Depend upon it, my hearer, you never will go to Heaven unless you are prepared to worship Jesus Christ as God. They are all doing it there: you will have to come to it, and if you entertain the notion that he is a mere man, or that he is anything less than God...

Worthy, indeed, is the Lamb.