

THE GRACE OF WRATH

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Text

Revelation 5:1-14

Topic

The Lamb of God takes the seven-sealed scroll from the right hand of God the Father

Title

"I Pray The Lord His Scroll To Take"

There is always 'the one.'

- In the *Lord of the Rings*, it was Aragorn. He was the 'one' true king who could wield Andùril, Isildur's broken sword reforged.
- Speaking of swords, only Arthur, the 'one' true king, could pull Excalibur from the anvil.
- If you're a fan of the *Matrix*... *I'll pray for you.* Neo was the 'one.'
- Emmet is the 'one.' In the *Lego* movie, Vitruvius prophesies that a person called "the Special" will find the Piece of Resistance capable of stopping the Kragle.

The apostle John was taken to Heaven "in the spirit." He saw a seven-sealed scroll in the "right hand" of God. A "strong angel" issued a call for someone "worthy to open the scroll." "No one in Heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll."

John despaired. Just then, dramatically, the One stepped forward Who was "worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals."

He is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah... He is the Lamb of God... He is Jesus.

We are beyond privileged to witness with John one of the most significant and magnificent moments in the history of the created universe. It is a day Jesus has been waiting upon since His ascension into Heaven. All of creation groans waiting for it.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 You Witness The Beginning Of The End Of Weeping,** and **#2 You Witness The Beginning Of The End Of Waiting.**

#1 - You Witness The Beginning Of The End Of Weeping (v1-5)

If you want to make a movie about earth, it needs to be in the horror genre. Every minute of every day, day after day, unspeakable sufferings are experienced worldwide.

God gets blamed. Why doesn't He do something? What God has done, is doing, and will do, can be discovered in our text.

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.

It is common in Bible commentary to become sidetracked by speculating on matters that will not be resolved with certainty.

The scroll in God's "right hand" - the *physical* scroll - is in that category. There is a lot of discussion about the *exact* placement of its seven seals. Some say they run the length of the scroll; others, that they are all at one end. Comparisons are made to Roman scrolls common at the time. Truth is, the scroll isn't described well enough to come to a definitive conclusion.

One detail that we can comment on is the writing "on the back." For most any ancient scroll, it summarizes what is written "inside" so you can distinguish it from other scrolls in your scroll pile.

God the Father has in His right hand a scroll sealed with seven seals. As Jesus opens each successive seal, we see on earth an accelerating progression of the wrath of God that Jesus described as "great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time... nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21).

The scroll is the 'operational plan' for the seven-year Great Tribulation that prepares the way for the Second Coming of Jesus.

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?"

Some angels work-out more than others at God's Gym. On his way to see Daniel, the angel Gabriel was delayed by a supernatural being he called the Prince of Persia until the archangel Michael was dispatched to take his place.

We are witnessing a very solemn future ceremony. Chapter four is its prelude:

- John, representing the church, was resurrected and raptured from earth to Heaven. We will be evacuated before God's wrath begins to be poured out.
- God's throne was "set," indicating readiness.
- Twenty-four subordinate thrones were "set" for a subordinate, supportive divine council of supernatural beings.
- Beautiful living creatures gave God praise.
- The twenty-four beings tossed crowns as they prostrated themselves before God singing "You are worthy O Lord."

It raised excitement and expectation for this strong angel to step forward with his call.

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.

“In Heaven... on earth... under the earth” describes all the possible locations of men and angels, both good and fallen.

It could be that this angel’s strength is his voice. His call will be heard everywhere. In case you are wondering, Irish teacher Annalisa Flanagan holds the world record for the loudest voice - 121.7 dBA. It is the equivalent of a jet engine.

Fans of the MCU will recall the scene where a few of the Avengers try to lift Thor’s hammer. They can’t do it. The mighty Thor suggests that he alone is ‘worthy’ to wield it.

I’m pretty sure no one came forward to attempt taking the scroll from the Father’s right hand.

The strong angel’s call is a suggestive pause that builds anticipation for what is coming next in this ceremony.

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

John did more than shed a solitary tear. “Wept much” describes something more like convulsing. It confirms that there was a pause of some length after the strong angel’s call.

John understood at least this much: Heaven was seeking the One, and unless He stepped forth there was no hope to redeem mankind and restore creation. At the very least, until the One stepped forth things would continue as they were.

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.”

Did John interrupt the ceremony and need to be told to quit weeping?

As far as I can tell, it was part of the ceremony, though a part of it that John was unaware of. Like being called on stage during a performance to become a participant and not just a spectator.

Knowing John the way Jesus does, it followed that the apostle of love would weep for the world's tragic condition.

We live in a pause between the ascension of Jesus and His return to resurrect and rapture the church. Weeping is appropriate. So is the counsel, "Do not weep." We must gently encourage those who suffer to look to Jesus. A.W. Tozer said, "It is Jesus, and Jesus alone, Who makes sense out of everything in this world."

One of the twenty-four said, "Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."

It is one of the superlative lines in all the history of the universe.

It proclaims the incredible time in future history when God will directly and openly intervene in men's affairs to give mankind one last opportunity to be saved before the coming of Jesus.

A commentator said, "Here [Judah's] noblest son is fitly called its lion. It aptly pictures kingly might and boldness."

The One is simultaneously "the Root of David." The *Greek Squad* says it can mean that the One was the "root" from which David was born, *i.e.*, David's ancestor. He is both the *ancestor* and the *descendant* of David.

It sounds like a riddle in the dark. How can a person be your ancestor *and* your offspring? Jesus once used this to stump the religious leaders hating on Him:

Luk 20:41 And He said to them, "How can they say that the Christ is the Son of David?"

Luk 20:42 Now David himself said in the Book of Psalms: 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,

Luk 20:43 TILL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES YOUR FOOTSTOOL."'

Luk 20:44 Therefore David calls Him 'LORD'; how is He then his Son?"

In the last chapter of the Revelation Jesus says, "I am the Root and the Offspring of David..." (22:16).

Jesus is root & offspring by coming in human flesh through the nation of Israel as the unique God-man to die for the sins of the world to redeem mankind and restore creation.

Why doesn't God do something?

- He *has* done something. He sent a willing Jesus to earth as God in human flesh to suffer and die in our place thereby saving those who believe.
- He *is doing* something. He is calling-out a people for Himself, the church, by sending human servants to preach the Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation.
- He *is going to do* something. He will unleash upon the earth a time of trouble such as has never been, nor ever will be again. We call it the grace of wrath on the grounds that He continues to call sinners to repentance and salvation throughout it.

The Scroll & the Savior is Heaven's breathtaking 7-year mini-series of the beginning of God ending weeping once-for-all.

#2 - You Witness The Beginning Of The End Of Waiting (v6-14)

I was tempted to give you a list of how much time is wasted throughout our short lifetimes waiting for things. *I decided it would be a waste of time.*

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.

John looked to see the Lion; He saw the Lamb.

I am no artist. If I was asked to draw what John saw I would cut-and-paste these images and it would look grotesque.

Heaven and all that is in it is supremely beautiful and wonderful. This portrayal of Jesus is beyond beautiful. When we see Him this way, we'll think, "OK, *that* is what John was saying."

If you are a big fan of some story, you can be pleasantly surprised at how one of its characters is translated to the screen in a film. You think, "OK, *that* is what a Balrog looks like."

John the Baptist proclaimed Jesus "the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world." He was the final and the fulfilling sacrifice that all of the animal sacrifices in the Bible were merely representing. It is no coincidence that Jesus was crucified at the exact time the Passover lambs were being slaughtered in the Jewish Temple.

"Horns" are used in the Bible to represent power. "Seven horns" indicate perfect power, or as we would say, omnipotence.

"Seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth." Compare this verse from the fourth chapter of Zechariah: "for these seven shall rejoice... *these are* the eyes of Jehovah, which run to and fro through the whole earth" (v10).

God the Holy Spirit likes to remain invisible and must be depicted by various things, e.g., a dove, oil, water, fire, wind, or in this case, "seven eyes."

John saw the Lion as the slain Lamb of God Who was very much alive and poised to execute the operational plan of God's wrath upon the whole earth in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Rev 5:7 Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

There was some choreography involved in Jesus being "in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders," and His movement to take the scroll from God the Father.

In relinquishing the scroll God the Father invested Jesus with the authority to open it and accomplish it.

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.

It's the final movement of the ceremony. The four & the twenty-four fall down in acclamation. The twenty-four hold a "harp" in one hand, and "bowls full of incense" in the other.

The "harp" is more than any other instrument associated with praise in the Bible. 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."

"Incense" is "the prayers of the saints." Which saints? Probably the ones saved during the Great Tribulation. We will read of their prayers a time or two as the Great Tribulation unfolds.

It anticipates the seven years are a time when many will heed the warnings and be saved, even though they will most likely experience martyrdom.

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,

They will sing "a new song," written for the ceremony, never heard before. It will be #1 for seven years on the charts in Heaven.

I'm reading from the NKJV. It says, "you have redeemed **us** to God." It sounds like these are humans that Jesus died to save. Here are some good, scholarly alternate translations:

- ESV "by your blood you ransomed **people** for God from every tribe and language and people and nation..."
- ISV "With your blood you purchased **people** for God from every tribe, language, people, and nation."
- NRSV "by your blood you ransomed for God **saints** from every tribe and language and people and nation."

You get the idea. These translations and many others acknowledge these are *not* glorified humans who are singing about themselves. They are supernatural beings singing about God's plan to redeem humanity.

Jesus' death on the Cross is the universal payment for sin by which any human being can be saved. He is the Savior of all men, especially those who believe.

God's Law, given to Israel, lists the requirements for someone to act as a redeemer:

1. He has to be blood relative who is willing to act as the redeemer.
2. He would also have to be God. No mere man who was born a sinner could hope to redeem himself, never mind others, from sin and death.
3. This person who was both God and man would then have to pay any outstanding debt. The debt owed for sin is death. The God-man

redeemer would have to offer himself willingly as a substitute sacrifice and die in our 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 except for One - the God-man, the Lord, Jesus Christ.

It's a little off our topic, however this verse gives us a chance to mention something that has become popular. For reasons that escape me, lately Christians want to contend that angels never sing. I know; it sounds odd. It's a thing. If we are correct that the twenty-four elders are angelic rather than glorified humans, that settles it. Plus when it says "they sang a new song," it is grammatically possible that "**they**" includes the four living ones. Robert Thomas writes, "This angelic host cannot be denied the ability to sing."

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

Those same translations I just referred to all say "have made **them** kings and priests" and "**they** will reign."

The reign they are proclaiming is the Millennial Kingdom on earth after Jesus' Second Coming. The church will return with Jesus and share in His earthly reign over earth as a kingdom of priests.

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,

Annually at the *Disneyland Resort* they hold a Christmas service called Candlelight. It features a full orchestra, multiple choirs and a celebrity narrator. The Main Street Train Station serves as the stage. The first time we attended I was surprised part way through it. All of a sudden we heard loud trumpets from the roof of the Train Station. The trumpeters were in the dark until it was time for them. It was very cool.

Without warning, yet at the right time, John could see and hear innumerable angels adding their voices.

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!"

In the Millennium, King Jesus will receive these universal accolades. Every knee will bow.

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 sounds very Narnian. All sentient life, everywhere in the universe, will acknowledge the power and position of God the Father and Jesus Christ. I would include God the Holy Spirit. He is not specifically mentioned, which is in keeping with His humility in remaining invisible while pointing to Jesus.

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.

It ain't over until the four living creatures "Amen!"

The twenty-four must get up at some earlier point in as much as they "[fall] down" a second time. They continue to worship after the "Amen!"

Thus comes to its conclusion this magnificent future moment. The wait will finally be over. When we turn the page, the Great Tribulation begins.

Waiting is hard. It might encourage you in your waiting to realize that Jesus knows waiting. Jesus consented to leave Heaven and become a man... To live in relative obscurity, working with His hands, for some thirty years... To be hated by those He came to save... To weep over Jerusalem... To be arrested, illegally tried, crucified... Still He waits, not willing that anyone perish. His will is that they would receive eternal life.

Is Jesus waiting for *you* to be saved?