

Worthy Is the Lamb:

Revelation 5:1–7 and the Unveiling of God’s Will

In Revelation 5:1–7, we are drawn into a dramatic heavenly scene centered on a sealed scroll and the One who alone is worthy to open it. This moment is a turning point in the vision John receives—a theological and cosmic declaration that through Jesus, God’s plan is set into motion and history moves toward its climactic fulfillment.

The Scroll in God’s Hand: The Will of God

The vision opens with a scroll “written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals” (Rev. 5:1). This scroll, resting at the right hand of God, represents nothing less than the *will* of God—His redemptive plan and sovereign purpose for history. The fact that the scroll is sealed underscores its sacred and authoritative nature. Its contents are hidden until the appointed One reveals them.

There are good reasons to understand the scroll as a kind of *will* or legal testament, as **Hebrews 9:16–17** explains:

“...a will is established only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.”

Christ’s death activates this divine will, and His resurrection ensures He alone is worthy to reveal and execute it.

The All-Encompassing Nature of God’s Will:

The scroll’s dual-sided writing indicates God’s comprehensive plan, with no room for human additions, is strong. This aligns with the biblical theme of God’s sovereignty over history. For example:

Isaiah 46:9-10: “I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.’”

The fully written scroll symbolizes this complete, unalterable divine purpose.

Psalms 33:11: “The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations.”

The scroll’s exhaustive content reflects this unchanging plan.

Ezekiel 2:9-10: "And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. And he spread it before me. And it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe."

The imagery of a scroll written on both sides is rare in ancient contexts (most scrolls were written on one side), emphasizing its completeness. Ezekiel 2:9-10, where a scroll is written on both sides with words of "lamentation and mourning and woe," supports the idea of a comprehensive divine decree.

Partial Revelation Before Christ:

Secondly, the writing on the outside could be partially visible to a "casual passerby" (e.g., prophets or angels), while the full contents are revealed only by Christ. This ties directly to the New Testament concept of the "mystery" of God's plan.

Ephesians 3:4-6: "When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel."

Paul describes the "mystery of Christ," which was "not made known to the sons of men in other generations" but is now revealed through the apostles and prophets. The scroll's outer writing symbolizes what was partially glimpsed in the Old Testament, while the inner contents, accessible only to the Lamb, represent the full revelation of God's redemptive plan through Christ.

1 Peter 1:10-12: "Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look."

Peter writes that the prophets "searched and inquired carefully" about the salvation to come, and "even angels long to look into these things." Prophets and angels had partial insight into God's plan (the "outside" of the scroll), but only Christ's work unlocks the full mystery.

Colossians 1:26-27: "the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the

Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

The "*mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints*" further reinforces that Christ's coming unveils God's complete will.

The Cosmic Crisis and John's Weeping:

A mighty angel proclaims, "*Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?*" (**Rev. 5:2**). But no one in heaven, on earth, or under the earth is found worthy. John's response is to weep loudly—a sign of the gravity of the moment. Without someone to open the scroll, God's purposes cannot be fulfilled.

This universal unworthiness reflects Paul's declaration in **Romans 3:23**:

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

and

Romans 8:20–22: "For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

Creation groans under the weight of sin and futility, and no human or angelic being can unlock the redemptive plan of God.

The Worthy One: Lion and Lamb

Then comes the turning point: one of the elders declares,

Revelation 5:5: "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered..."

This title evokes **Genesis 49:9–10**, a messianic prophecy that the scepter would not depart from Judah, and **Isaiah 11:1**, where the messianic shoot comes from the root of Jesse. The Lion symbolizes royal power, victory, and authority.

But when John turns to look, he sees **a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain** (v. 6). The shift from Lion to Lamb is a profound theological paradox: the Messiah has conquered not through military power but through sacrificial death. This slain-yet-standing Lamb is Jesus, the one whom John the Baptist called:

John 1:29: "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world"

echoing:

Isaiah 53:7: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth."

where the Suffering Servant is led like a lamb to slaughter.

Paul declares this victory in:

1 Corinthians 15:54–57: "When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

describing Christ's resurrection as triumph over sin and death.

Philippians 2:8–11: "And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

This further highlights that Jesus' obedience unto death leads to His exaltation, a clear parallel to the Lamb being found worthy to open the scroll and receive worship.

The Lamb's Divine Attributes: Seven Horns and Seven Eyes

The Lamb is described as having *seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God* (Rev. 5:6). These symbols are rich in meaning:

Horns represent strength and authority. Seven horns point to complete or perfect power.

Psalms 18:2: The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Seven Eyes, Which are the seven spirits of God* refer to the fullness of the Holy Spirit, indicating that the Lamb operates with the Spirit in all His fullness.

Isaiah 11:2: "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord."

Zechariah 4:10: "These seven are the eyes of the Lord, which range through the whole earth."

This image presents Jesus not only as the worthy executor of God's will but as one sharing in divine omnipotence and omniscience—fully God and fully empowered to accomplish God's purposes.

Trinitarian Unity

The Trinitarian dynamic is revealed in Revelation 5: the Father (on the throne), the Son (the Lamb), and the Spirit (the seven spirits) work together to execute God's plan. This further points to the scroll as God's comprehensive will, enacted through Christ's Spirit-empowered authority.

The Scroll as Inheritance and Judgment

While the scroll functions as God's will, it also contains the inheritance promised to the Son

Psalms 2:8: Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.

and the judgments associated with the transition from the Old Covenant to the New. The breaking of the seals reveals, progressively, the outworking of this divine will culminating in the full establishment of Christ's Kingdom.

This is in harmony with

Daniel 7:13–14: "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

where the "Son of Man" receives dominion and a kingdom from the Ancient of Days. Christ's taking of the scroll mirrors this moment: He receives the Kingdom as part of the inheritance granted through His death and resurrection.

Colossians 1:20 reinforces this:

“...through him to reconcile to himself all things... making peace by the blood of his cross.”

The Inauguration of the New Covenant

The seven seals (Revelation 6-8) will unfold in stages, revealing judgments (e.g., the four horsemen, martyrdom, cosmic upheaval) that culminate in the full disclosure of God's plan: the New Covenant's inauguration.

Matthew 24:6-8: "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains."

Jesus' Olivet Discourse describes wars, famines, and earthquakes as "the beginning of the birth pains," which parallels the seals' judgments these events lead up to AD 70 and the destruction of Jerusalem, signifying the transition from the Old Covenant to the New.

Hebrews 8:13: "In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away."

The old covenant is "obsolete" and "ready to vanish away," which supports the idea that Revelation's seals depict the establishment of the New Covenant through judgment on the old order. Each seal unveils another aspect of how Christ's victory reshapes the world, culminating in the Kingdom's full realization.

Luke 22:20: "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

Jesus describes the cup of the Last Supper as "the new covenant in my blood." The seals' judgments are the outworking of this covenant's establishment, with Christ's death and resurrection enabling the transfer of authority from the old order to the new.

Revelation 21:5: The declaration, "Behold, I am making all things new," reflects the ultimate outcome of the scroll's opening: the New Covenant's inauguration.

Conclusion: Why This Matters

Revelation 5 reminds us that God's purposes do not unfold randomly or through human strength. They are revealed and enacted by the Lamb who was slain. Christ alone is worthy.

The weeping of John gives way to worship. Revelation 5 invites us to trust that the scroll is in the right hands. And the hands are pierced.