

Comments on Revelation 5

John's vision of heaven continues with him seeing God the Father upon His throne holding a scroll with seven seals upon it (v. 1). None are worthy to unseal the scroll (v. 2-4), except the Lamb, the Son of God (v. 5). All in heaven (v. 6-10, 14) and all living creatures (v. 11-13) praise God and the Lamb for accomplishing salvation for them.

This chapter and the previous chapter are intended to introduce the subject of ch. 6. In the present chapter all of heaven and earth acknowledge the Son's right to open the scroll which contains the Father's will concerning His Creation. Chapter 6 then details the Father's will and judgements concerning the Creation. Thus, ch. 4-5 explain why the Father and Son are qualified judges. The Father is the prime Creator and the Son is the Redeemer, so they are entitled and justified in judging Their redeemed creation.

1 AND I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? 3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. 4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. 5 And one of the elders saith unto me, weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

v1 The scroll and seals are interpreted in D&C 77:6-7, as follows:

6 Q. What are we to understand by the book which John saw, which was sealed on the back with seven seals?

A. We are to understand that it contains the revealed will, mysteries, and the works of God; the hidden things of his economy concerning this earth during the seven thousand years of its continuance, or its temporal existence.

7 Q. What are we to understand by the seven seals with which it was sealed?

A. We are to understand that the first seal contains the things of the first thousand years, and the second also of the second thousand years, and so on until the seventh.

The scroll contains God's intentions and plans for the 7000 years of earth's temporal existence. The interpretation in D&C 77:6 says the scroll contains "the hidden things of his economy". The theological usage of the word "economy" means "the divine plan for man, or any method of divine administration".

"a book", the Greek term "biblion" is better translated to "scroll".

v3 "in heaven, nor in the earth, neither under the earth", This is a merism, or a statement of complete inclusivity as there is nothing that does not fall into one of these three parts.

This is also the classic triplet of celestial, terrestrial, telestial, see also v. 13, cp. Exod. 20:4-11, Ps. 148, Isa. 44:23, Phil. 2:10.

v4 John weeps out of fear God's plans will be frustrated because mankind cannot, or will not, accomplish His will.

v5 "the Lion of the tribe of Juda", drawing on the imagery of Gen. 49:9. Also cp. 4:7.

"the Root of David", David was promised the Messiah would come through his lineage, thus Christ is "the son of David", cf. 2 Sam. 7, also cp. Isa. 11:10, Matt. 22:41-46, Luke 1:31-33.

6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. 7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four [and] twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. 9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; 10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

v6 "a Lamb", drawing on symbolism of the sacrificial lamb, cf. Gen. 22:8, Exod. 12:3-5, Lev. 4:32-35.

"seven...seven...seven", the IV/JST emends this to "twelve...twelve...twelve", presumably to represent the 12 apostles. This also differentiates these servants from the seven angels in 8:1-10:3 who pour out vials of woe upon the inhabitants of the earth.

v7 The Son approaches the Father on His right hand and takes the scroll from His hand. The implicit symbolism is of equality and favored status. The Son approaches on the right hand, the favored hand, and that anyone can approach the Father at His level implies equality.

v8-10 All exalted creatures in heaven owe their exaltation to the Son, hence their gratitude and praise.

v8 "odours", the Greek is better translated to "incense". The imagery is of the traditional burnt offering where the smoke ascending into heaven is symbolic of the prayers of those making the offering.

v9 "they sung a new song", singing a new song, a song of salvation is a common Old Testament theme of rejoicing in redemption, cf. Ps. 96:1, Isa. 42:10, Alma 5:26. Compare 14:3, 15:2-3.

"and has redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation", this line is ambiguously worded in the KJV. It almost reads like Israel is saying it is redeemed by the blood of other nations, which is not the author's intent. A better reading is "for Thou wast slain, and did purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (NAS).

11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 12 Saying with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

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, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, [be] unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four [and]

twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

v11-14 In addition to the post-mortal exalted beings (v. 8-10), the ante-mortal spirits (v. 11-12) and mortal beings (v. 13) praise the Lamb as well. After which praise the post-mortal exalted beings endorse and echo (v. 14).

v11 The hosts of heaven are numberless. John's intent is to emphatically express his astonishment at having such great numbers of angels revealed to him.

v12 The Son, by virtue of his sacrifice, is worthy to receive all the Father has.

v13 All creatures in every part of Creation bow and praise God and Lamb, cp. Isa. 45:23.

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