

CHAPTER FIVE

Introduction:

This chapter continues with the throne scene. In Chapter 4 we saw the throne set in Heaven, with all glory, honor and praise given to the One seated on the throne – Jehovah. In this chapter our attention will shift to the Lamb, Jesus the Christ. As before, the text for this vision will be cited and the discussion will follow. And, as with all of the visions, I encourage you to read the text slowly and let the scene form in your mind as you go.

The Scroll and the Lamb

“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. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?’ And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, ‘Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.’ 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. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. 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 odors, which are the prayers of saints. And they

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Six

sang 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; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.’ 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; Saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.’ 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 honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.’ And the four beasts said, ‘Amen.’ And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.”

You will recall that Lesson 5 left off as the 24 elders were praising God, and this lesson begins at the same place in that same scene. John notices that God is holding a book in His right hand. It is not a flat book with pages, but a strip of papyrus written on both sides, rolled and sealed with 7 seals. This image depicts the typical way scrolls were sealed. After being rolled up and tied with a ribbon or cord it was common practice to melt wax over the knot of the cord and press a signet ring or other identifying mark into the wax to “seal” the document. Sometimes the document was of such length that it was rolled onto two wooden rods.



A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Six

The scroll spoken of in the vision; however, was filled with writing on both sides of the papyrus, indicating the book is full or complete with no room for more to be written. I visualize God's right arm being fully extended, His hand open and the scroll lying in His palm. It is being offered to anyone worthy to take it and read its content. Nothing is said that might indicate the size of the scroll in God's hand, except that it was written on both sides. Nothing is said to indicate how the scroll was sealed, except that it was sealed with seven seals. Perhaps it looked similar to this image or perhaps not, but what we do know is that God holds it in His outstretched hand offering it to some worthy person.



As John looks on, a “strong angel,” fearless, gallant, and speaking with powerful words, proclaims with a loud voice in verse 3: “Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?” We are given to understand that this angel's proclamation was heard across every realm of life because no one stepped forward ***“in Heaven, on earth, or even under the earth.”*** Let's keep in mind that this would include not only everyone on earth and the angels in heaven, but also everyone in this scene in John's vision other than God Himself: The living creatures, the 24 elders and even John. When John concludes there is ***“no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, able to open the book,”*** and realizes what he has just witnessed, John writes that he ***“wept much.”***

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Six

Soon, though, one of the 24 elders around the Throne speaks to John, and tells him, ***“Weep not, behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has prevailed to open the book and loose the seals.”*** John’s spirit is immediately lifted because he knows who that is, and he eagerly begins to look around, searching for Jesus. The last time John saw Him was in the midst of the candlesticks, but he evidently does not see Him now.

I believe it is futile to attempt to identify the elder that spoke to John, but a popular belief is that it was Peter, John’s fellow apostle. It is almost certain that at the time of this writing, John was the only living Apostle. And if you recall from part 3, one of the views in regard to the 24 elders is that they were comprised of the 12 patriarchs, representing the old covenant, and the 12 apostles representing the new covenant. With that in mind, it is not too far-fetched to suggest Peter as the one who spoke to John; however, it would be pure speculation. But, while we’re discussing this particular view, consider this: Since John was one of the original twelve, how can the 24 elders include the 12 apostles if one of them is still living? It does make one have second thoughts about who the 24 elders represent.

John continues to search for Jesus, but as yet is unable to locate him. Then... he sees Him; however, it is not the magnificent image he saw in the midst of the candlesticks. Standing in the midst of the throne, the four living creatures and the 24 elders, John sees a lamb, as it had been slain. John says ***“I beheld, and lo...”*** It is as if the lamb was not there... and then it was! The description of where the lamb stood might better be described as between the throne and the four living creatures, and the 24 elders. You might want to glance back at the sketch I drew showing what I envision in regard to the arrangement of the throne scene.

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Six

Some commentators believe the lamb was there all along, standing before the Throne, in and among the 24 elders and beyond the sea of glass, but it wasn't until now that John noticed Him. I doubt that because the earlier descriptions given by John indicate that he was carefully watching, looking about, so he could accurately record what he saw. Consider, also, that when the elder told John not to weep, there is no mention of the elder getting out of his seat and coming to speak to John, nor is it mentioned that he raised his voice. That suggests John was close enough to the elders to hear them speak, so it stands to reason he was also close enough to see the lamb standing before the Throne if it had been there all along. As I understand the scene, either the lamb was not there in the beginning of the scene, or he was just not visible to John until he beheld Him. The way John describes his first sight of the Lamb: "I beheld and Lo... there stood a Lamb," tells me John didn't see Him, and "Lo," he did. It is important that in your mental picture, you see a lamb, not a powerful ram because the Greek word used is "auvos" which is a reference to lowliness and meekness of a gentle lamb. The idea of "lowliness and meekness" relates to Jesus' life during His ministry. He did not "overcome" by His might or power, though He could have. He overcame by being subjective to God's authority and by His meekness and love for mankind. He willingly died on the cross.

John says the Lamb was standing "*as it had been slain,*" and quickly adds the Lamb "*came and took the book...*" How does a lamb stand so as to indicate it had been slain? And similarly, how does a lamb "take the book" from God's hand?

For the answer, we need to take a closer look at visions: John says, "*I saw.*" In most places in the scriptures where visions are recorded, the one having the vision usually says these

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Six

two words. Did they see? Not in the way we see – “by sight.” In most instances, and certainly here, the one “*seeing*” the vision is revealing ideas conveyed to him in ways other than through the senses! Do you dream? Probably so, and when you do, what do you see? How are the ideas or impressions you “see” in your dream related to you? Most likely your eyes are closed so you don’t actually “see” them. Our dreams usually contain distinct ideas concerning some object or person without us really knowing HOW we got those ideas.

Often, when we repeat our dreams to others, they see incongruity or contradictory qualities that we never noticed. In fact, none of the impressions we get in a dream come from the senses. We do not actually see, feel, smell, or hear; but our minds gave us the sense of having experienced those things. What I’m saying is John KNEW the lamb had been slain! His senses may not have conveyed the thought from seeing the lamb, but he KNEW!

The visions that John records in this book are similar to dreams, but unlike our dreams, John has been placed in a special “state” in which these visions occur. The result is the visions are put into his mind by God, perhaps working through the Holy Spirit, or maybe directly, but the images put into John’s mind are coming from God. So when John said the Lamb stood as slain, he KNEW the Lamb had been slain.

“Seven Horns”... The lamb is described as having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth! Again, we see “perfection in the sense of completeness” expressed by the number seven. Throughout the Bible horns are used as a symbol of power. In Deut. 33:17, Moses said concerning Joseph, “... *his horns are like the*

horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth.” And remember, Matthew records, *“And Jesus came, and spoke to them, saying, All power is given to me in heaven and upon earth.”* (Matt. 28:18)

“Seven eyes...” Eyes are the symbol of knowledge. Seven eyes would symbolize perfect knowledge or omniscience, and John tells us it comes from the Holy Spirit. So what we should get from this verse is that the Lamb has complete power symbolized by the seven horns, and complete awareness symbolized by the seven eyes, all wrapped in the figure of the Holy Spirit.

John then records that the Lamb came and took the book out of God’s right hand! When he did that, the 4 living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the Lamb. Each of them had a harp and what John describes as “golden vials of odors,” which John says are the prayers of saints. And they sang a new song saying, *“Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals...”* The phrase “thou art worthy” implies “you have done something to make you worthy”?

The Lamb, then, had the right to take the book from the right hand of God, the very source of all power and authority. This assures us that Jesus has been given all authority directly from the hand of God, thus allowing him to say, **“All authority has been given to me.”** God allows the Lamb to take the book, which further sanctions the transfer of power. The result is the Son of God, in His capacity as the sacrificial lamb, is worthy to take on the task of revealing the mysteries of eternity, in which He, as the Son of God, has a part.

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Six

“The New Song...” is NEW because of a tense shift in their speech.. They no longer are singing, *“thou are worthy because you will redeem...”* Now they are singing *“thou art worthy because you have redeemed.”* Obviously, the price was the blood of Jesus! The new song ends with the phrase in verse 10: *“And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”* One's interpretation of this passage can be biased by his overall view of the book. As mentioned in the introduction to this study, there are several views in regard to the meaning of the book of Revelation. If you believe the “thousand years” of Chapter 20 to be a literal “earthly 1000 year reign” then you see in this passage a reference to that. Or, if you believe the “thousand years” to be the time that elapses between the first and second coming of Christ, then this passage would naturally connect to Chapter 20, and refer to that period.

Therefore, we must determine the sense in which the term “reign” is used and how it may be said that the “redeemed” will reign on the earth. I believe it is plainly taught that Jesus Christ’s reign in His kingdom on the earth is a *spiritual reign over a spiritual kingdom!* Certainly, the Jews erred when they thought “the Messiah” would retake the physical throne of David and create a nation to be a world power. Just as Jews believed, we find folks frequently believing that Christ’s kingdom will be a visible, worldly power. But in view of the extensive teaching contained in the New Testament (and in prophecy) about the SPIRITUAL nature of Christ’s kingdom, we ought not to err in the same way as the Jews. The redeemed reign SPIRITUALLY and are so doing this very hour!

Having said that, it might be good to look into what is intended by the expression a “spiritual reign.” First, the word “reign” is seldom used in regard to Christians in the New

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Six

Testament: In Romans 5:17 we read, ***“For if by the transgression of the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.”*** In 1st Corinthians 4:8 we read, ***“You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and I would indeed that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you.”***

In both of these places, Paul is talking about a *“reign over ourselves”* – the ability to subdue personal passions; a power which comes from the **“abundance of grace”** and of the **“gift of righteousness”** which are both mentioned. Only the redeemed through Jesus Christ possess that ability. I believe that Paul was telling the Corinthians they were lacking in that power! Solomon said, ***“Better is he that ruleth his own spirit than he that taketh a city!”*** (Proverbs 16:32)

So in Revelation 5 we see the four living creatures as representatives of all of creation, and the 24 elders as representatives of the “redeemed of all nations.” They are worshiping the Lamb (Jesus Christ) as the one from whom we get the power to reign over the evil influences of Satan!

Lastly, John says he beheld and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, the living creatures, and elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands. There are those who try to decipher this number, and they have arrived at several different figures that range from 100 million as the least, and a billion as the

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Six

most. The number is not to be taken literally! The idea is of “myriads.” I believe it is ALL the hosts of heaven!

Verse 12 of chapter 5, reads: *“Saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.’”* What do you see here in your mind’s eye? I think we all see the same thing: every created creature - everyone - praising both the One sitting on the throne and the Lamb forever and ever... and the 24 elders falling down and worshipping Him that lives forever and ever.

Beginning in the next lesson, we will see, as each seal is opened, *“all the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven.”* As each seal is broken a phenomenon will appear suggesting the nature of the contents. However, there is much that must be withheld until after the end of all earthly things because no mortal can receive perfect knowledge of the “mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven.” With that in mind, after the opening of the seventh seal, we will see a very special phenomenon.

It is noteworthy to mention before we close this section that, at least as far as we can see from John’s account, the scroll is never read... all seven of the seals are removed, but the scroll itself is never read. We’ll talk more about that in the next lesson.