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The Mission  
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## Revelation 5

You know a lot of men down through the ages have tried to conquer the world and become the supreme authority and leader of the world. Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, Alexander the Great, the emperors of Rome, Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini and a host of others have tried it; and they all have two things in common; they all failed, and they all died and are still dead.

And in the future, the Bible tells us that another will come and try to do the same thing. And he too will fail and eventually die along with all the other enemies of God.

Only One has the right, and the power, and the authority to rule this world; and that's the Lord Jesus. And one day He's going to take back what rightfully belongs to Him and He's going to restore what He originally created back to the way He designed it to be. And so that's basically what all this is about.

And so chapter 5, both physically and chronologically occurs after chapter 4.

Now, in chapter 4 if you'll remember John was somehow transported in the Spirit or in his mind to heaven. And the door to heaven he said was open.

Now, he doesn't describe the door itself but only what he saw and heard from inside. In verse 1 of chapter 4, John writes that he saw the door

of heaven open and then he heard a voice that sounded like a trumpet and the voice said, “Come up here and I will show you things which must take place after this.”

Now, that phrase “after these things” we determined was the Rapture of the church. And that’s when Jesus will suddenly return to somewhere just above the earth; and those who have died as believers in Christ, as well as those who are still alive and follow Christ, will be caught up into the air to meet Jesus. And then Jesus is going to take us all to heaven to forever be with Him. And so that phrase “after these things” is referring to that event. And so the church is in heaven in chapter 5.

Now, most Christians I believe, me included, have always just assumed that the seven year tribulation period, which follows the Rapture, which is what we’re about to study, most people assume it will occur immediately after the Rapture of the church. But that phrase, “after these things” doesn’t tell us that. In fact, no where in Scripture can I find where we’re given a definite length of time between the Rapture of the church and the beginning of the Tribulation period.

And so we don’t really know how long it will be after the church is taken out of this world to the beginning time of the tribulation. It could be immediately or it could be many, many years later. And that’s why when you look at the things that are going to occur during the tribulation period, like the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem and like peace in the middle east and like the appearance of the antichrist and the ten member confederation and all the other things that are prophesied, you can’t look at the fact that none of those things have even begun to even look like they’re going to happen, and assume that the Rapture is far off.

The Rapture could occur any second and we don't know when all these other things will begin to take place. That's why nobody but God and Jesus know the time of His second coming. Nobody knows the day and the hour. And for a genuine born again Christian, it doesn't matter. For an unbeliever it matters a lot; or at least it should.

And so the scene here in chapter 5 just like it was in chapter 4 is situated around the throne of God. And in verse one John writes;

**Revelation 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.**

And so again John sees the throne and at least the appearance of God. And evidently he saw a figure of some type because he sees that this scroll is in God's right hand.

And by the way, this is God the Father on the throne. And the Holy Spirit is there and the cherubim which we talked about last week are there and the 24 elders are there as well.

And the 24 elders we determined represent the church. They can't represent Israel because Israel hasn't been saved yet. And they can't represent angels for a number of reasons that we talked about last week that I won't go back over. And why there are 24 we can only speculate.

Several times the number 24 is used in the Bible and it either symbolizes completion or representation.

In 1 Chronicles chapters 24 & 25, it talks about the priests, who were officials of the sanctuary and officials of the house of God, and the number of them was 24. And other than that all we know is that they represent the church. That's the only logical answer.

Now, if you're using the KJV, the writers use the word "book" in verse 1. Most other translations use the word scroll; which is evidently what the word book is referring to since bound books did not exist in the early days of the church. And so they would write on these scrolls, which were made of the bulrushes that grew along the rivers, and they were very time consuming and costly to make and so copies were very scarce.

Now, this particular scroll is extremely scarce because it's one of a kind. This is Christ's title deed to creation, which God holds in His right hand and is about to give to the Lord Jesus.

Now, the contract itself would have been very familiar to John and his readers back then. This was a contract that was used a lot all over the Middle East in ancient times, and it was also used by the Romans from the time of Nero on.

And whether it was a will or some other official contract, the terms of the contract would be written on the inside of the scroll and then the explanation of the contract would be written on the outside, or the backside. And then it would be signed and sealed by at least three witnesses.

Now, the more important the document, the more witnesses and the more seals that would be used. And so here we have seven. This title deed was sealed with seven seals, which again is God's number for completion and perfection.

And so John sees this scroll, or this will in God's right hand, which He is about to give to the Lord Jesus.

Now, in most wills there would be a detailed description of what was to be inherited, but this will was different. There's no detailed description of what Jesus would inherit, but rather a play by play if you will, of **how** He

would inherit it. In other words, it describes how He will take back what Satan has stolen, and what rightfully belongs to Him.

And Ezekiel hundreds of years prior saw what was in this scroll.

**Ezekiel 2:9, Now when I looked, there was a hand stretched out to me; and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. 10 Then He spread it before me; and there was writing on the inside and on the outside, and written on it were lamentations and mourning and woe.**

All he saw were lamentations and mourning and woe.

Now, one reason it may not contain the details of Christ's inheritance is because we should already know what that entails. We should already know that it includes the whole world and everything in it.

**John 1:3 says, All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.**

Jesus created all things; and all things rightfully belong to Him. And even though Satan stole them away, Jesus purchased them back with His blood, which He shed on Calvary.

And that truth is verified down in verse 9.

**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,**

Now, it's also true that a will could only be opened by the rightful heir, and again scripture verifies that Christ is not only the rightful heir, but that He's also the "heir of all things".

**Hebrews 1:2, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;**

Something else about the scroll is the fact that since the scroll is written on both sides, nothing else can be added to it. In other words, the destiny of this old sinful world in which we live has already been determined, and nothing, or nobody can ever change what will take place when these judgments are poured out upon the earth.

Now, to completely understand this scene, we need to understand a little bit about the Hebrew system of owning land. If a man became poor and had to sell his land, or had to offer himself up as a slave to the one he owed, he could be redeemed by a kinsman.

**Leviticus 25:25, 'If one of your brethren becomes poor, and has sold some of his possession, and if his redeeming relative comes to redeem it, then he may redeem what his brother sold.**

And of course, the story of Ruth is based on this law. If you remember that story, it was Boaz that went through the legal process to become the kinsman-redeemer for both Ruth and Naomi. And Boaz eventually married Ruth and they had a child, and his name was Obed. And Obed was the grandfather of King David.

And so this redeemer had to be a near relative who was willing and able to purchase the property and set the kinsman free. And all of creation has been under bondage to sin, and to Satan, and to death; but now Christ, our Kinsman-Redeemer, is going to set creation free.

And by the way, God makes it very clear that only Christ can redeem. There's no saint in glory, no person on earth, no soul in the underworld, that could rightfully take that book. No one but Jesus was and is worthy.

And then in verse 2 John saw,

**2 Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice,  
“Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?”**

Now, some folks thing this angel is Gabriel, others thing it's Michael, but God doesn't tell us who it is. All we know is that he shouted this question loud enough for the whole world to hear what he was saying. But nobody answered. There was only silence, because there is nobody worthy. And John says that in verse 3.

**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.**

Not only could no-one open it, but no-one could even read what was inside! And then he says;

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

W. A. Criswell writes this about why John wept. He said, John's tears represent the tears of all God's people through all the centuries. The tears of the apostle John are the tears of Adam and Eve, when they were driven out of the Garden of Eden, as they bowed over the first grave, as they watered the dust of the ground with their tears over the silent still form of their son Abel.

The tears that John cried are the tears of the children of Israel in bondage as they cried out to God in their affliction and slavery. They're the tears of God's elect down through the centuries as they cried unto heaven. They're the sobs and the tears that have been wrung from the heart and soul of God's people as they looked on their silent dead, as they stand beside their open graves, as they experience and the trouble and trials and sufferings of life, and the heartaches and disappointments indescribable.

“Such is the curse that sin has laid on God’s beautiful creation. And this is the damnation of the hand of him who holds it: that usurper, that interloper, that intruder, that alien, that stranger, that dragon, that serpent, that Satan-the devil.

And so John wept audibly for the failure to find a redeemer, because it meant that this earth, and its curse is consigned forever to death. It meant that death and sin and damnation and hell should reign forever and ever, and the sovereignty of God’s earth should remain forever in the hands of Satan.”

And so at that thought he wept. But his weeping was not fitting. His weeping was not fitting. As far as he could see there wasn’t anyone. But he had no cause to weep. And he shouldn’t have wept, because of what was about to happen.

And as we think about John’s tears being inappropriate, we need to be reminded of a story in Luke 7. In fact, if you have your Bible turn there with me.

It happens verse 11 of Luke chapter 7, in a city called Nain. Jesus and His disciples, along with a large multitude, approached the gate of this city, and there was a dead man being carried out. He was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and there was a sizeable crowd from the city that was with her.

And when the Lord saw her, the Bible says, He felt compassion for her, and He said to her, ‘Do not weep. Stop sobbing, it’s inappropriate.’”

Her only son had just died. So why was her weeping inappropriate? Well, it was inappropriate, because of what Jesus was about to do!

And the Bible says He came up and He touched the coffin; and the pallbearers came to a halt. And He said, ‘Young man, I say to you, arise!’



And the dead man sat up and he began to speak. And the young man probably said something like, “I appreciate all you folks coming to my funeral, but let’s eat lunch! “And Jesus gave him back to his mother.”

And so it was inappropriate for his mother, or anybody else for that matter, to weep. Why? Because Jesus was going to act.

The same thing happened in Luke chapter 8 when the synagogue official’s daughter died. And they were all weeping and mourning for the girl. But Jesus said, ‘Stop weeping, it’s inappropriate’. But the girl’s dead! Why is it inappropriate? Because of what Jesus was about to do!

He said, she hasn’t died, she’s only asleep. In other words, it’s not permanent.

But they could see that she was clearly dead at least physically she was dead. But Jesus said, No she’s just asleep, and then He told her to rise up and she rose up. And so their weeping was inappropriate.

And so John’s tears here are inappropriate. Why? Because of what Jesus was about to do.

And then in verse 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.”**

And so some members of the church told John, they said, “Don’t weep”, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, and that’s Jesus! Jesus is here. And He’s about to do something! He can open it! And He can loose the seven seals. And in verse 6 he says,

**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 looks and between the throne of God and the four living creatures, which are the four cherubim we talked about last week, and John sees the Lord Jesus. Only he doesn't see Him as the judge of the world, or as a conquering king, at least not here, but he rather sees Him as a Lamb. But it's not an ordinary Lamb that he sees, because He's standing. And though He appears as if He has been slain, He's alive.

His scars would no doubt have been evident, but also evident was the fact that He was alive. And even though Satan and his demons and many evil men had tried their best to kill Him, there he stands alive and well. And somebody has rightly said, the only main made things that we're going to find in heaven are the scars of Jesus.

And though He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords; and through He will conquer all His enemies and judge and rule over the entire earth here shortly, He's showing here how He had to first come as Lamb. And how He had to become the perfect sacrifice to pay for the sins of the world.

And then John sees seven horns, which represent His strength and power. And seven eyes which speak of Christ's omniscience and complete understanding and knowledge and perfect wisdom.

The seven eyes also represent the seven spirits of God which describe the Holy Spirit in His completeness and fullness. And He's being sent out into all the earth to judge guilty sinners who have been unrepentant. And everything that John has seen and recorded since the beginning of chapter 4 has been building up to this moment that's about to take place in verse 7.

**7 Then He (that's Jesus) came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.**

And this is the same scene that Daniel saw back in Daniel chapter 7:13-14.

**Daniel 7:13, "I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him.**

**14 Then 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 the one Which shall not be destroyed.**

And then in verse 8,

**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.**

**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,**

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

**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,**

**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!”**

**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!”**

**14 Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.**

When Christ takes the book, all of heaven and earth break out in praise! The elders (which represent the glorified church) sing His praises and magnify His death for the redemption of a lost creation.

Heaven sings about the cross. The vials of incense which typify the prayers of God’s people, are lifted up to heaven, which is a symbolic reminder that God not only hears, but remembers every prayer of His people! And that God will one day answer every prayer of His people including those who have suffered persecution and trials because of their faith.

And then it says, The elders sing, but the angels “**say** with a loud voice.” And again, there’s no evidence in the Bible that angels sing. In Job 38:7 it states that, at Creation, the “sons of God, which are angels shouted for joy.” The “Christmas angels” in Luke 2 praised God by “saying,” not by

singing. The multitudes of angels in heaven joined their voices in a great shout of praise, when the Lamb took the scroll, but they did not sing.

Singing is a privilege reserved for the saints of God who have experienced the joy of salvation. There are many things angels can do that saints cannot; but an angel cannot experience salvation, nor can he sing with the saints the praises of the Lamb.

And so that's what John saw and heard in heaven.

Now, next week when we get to chapter 6 John's not going to be writing about heaven; he's going to be writing what he sees happening on earth from heaven. Chapters 6-18 are going to describe all the judgements that will be poured out on the earth during the Tribulation. And things are going to get really bad real fast, so you don't want miss on Wednesday night anymore. Amen

And so for next week, read chapter six and we'll see what John saw.