

## The Glory of the Lamb (5:1-14)

### I. The Scroll (Grk: "Biblion")

- A. It was in the right hand of the one on the throne
  - 1. Right hand is a metaphor for power. In Hebrew thought, hand could mean either hand, or power
  - 2. Examples: Exo 15:6, 12; Ps 63:8; 77:10; 89:13; 98:1; 118:16

- B. The scroll is written on both sides – A complete, or full message  
(Similar to scroll in Ezek 2:10, except that one was not sealed)

- C. The fact it was a scroll would have brought one or more associated images in mind



- 1. A scroll in the hand of God may make a Hebrew think of the Torah, the word of the Lord
- 2. The Lords book of life, with names of God's people  
- Ps 69:28; Luk 10:21; Phil 4:3
- 3. Last will an testament (typically sealed with seven seals and executed when seals are broken)
- 4. A book of prophecy written on a scroll and sealed for the future  
- Isa 8:16; 29:11; Dan 12:4
- 5. The context tells us that it is the last of these

- D. It had seven seals

- 1. Seals were used on a variety of items in the ancient world
  - a. Seals were important for legal reasons. Sealing of possessions, beasts, slaves all denoted ownership and was designed to prevent theft.<sup>1</sup>
  - b. When used of documents, the seal was served as a type of signature to authorize what was written in it
  - c. Seals were also used to close or shut up a document to prevent others from looking at it<sup>2</sup>
- 2. The fact that the scroll had seven seals indicates several things
  - a. The message has seven "signatures" of God
  - b. Therefore, the message was true and trustworthy

### II. Attempt to open the scroll

- A. A strong angel asks who is "worthy" (Grk: axios) to break the seals
  - 1. No one qualified, not the angels, or any other creature
  - 2. This may seem strange at first

<sup>1</sup> Schippers, Reinier. "Seal," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown, 3:497. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986.

<sup>2</sup> Reinier, 498.

- a. One of the functions of angels was a messenger
    - b. The Greek, “angelos” means messenger
    - c. If the scroll was merely a message, then it would seem an official “messenger” should be able to deliver it.
  - 3. Perhaps the idea is that the breaking of the seals denotes more than a mere relaying of a message.
    - a. Kings at times would send a sealed order to one of his subjects
    - b. Only the person to whom the message intended had the right to break the seal and read the order
    - c. Breaking the seal, then, would signify execution of the order. The one who breaks the seal has the authority to execute the order
- B. It is possible that the breaking of the seal signifies not merely revealing of what was to happen, but actually bringing it about. Whoever “breaks the seal” executes the word of the one on the throne.
- C. John wept when no one was found to open the scroll
- 1. Greek: klaio – To weep, cry, bewail. It is used of violent emotional weeping
    - a. Typically used of laments
    - b. It is not the word used of Jesus in John 11:35, (dakruo). There it means crying, but not bewailing
  - 2. The adverb “greatly” further intensifies the emotion John felt
  - 3. The reason John wept?
    - a. If opening of the scroll signified execution of God’s plan, then an unopened scroll meant the message would not come to pass
    - b. No one was worthy to break the seals
      - Not the elders with the golden crowns
      - Not the cherubim or seraphim
      - Not the Christians of the seven churches
    - c. At first, it seemed that the Christians in the first three chapters of Revelation have failed
      - It may have seemed at this point, that John’s vision was to be a message of judgement on believers
      - This would not be the first time oppressive powers persecuted God’s people as a sign of God’s judgment.
      - Assyria and Babylon were instrument of God’s judgment on his people

### III. The Conquering Lion/ Lamb

A. One of the elders told John not to weep because there was one able to open the scroll

B. He was powerful – The Lion of the Tribe of Judah

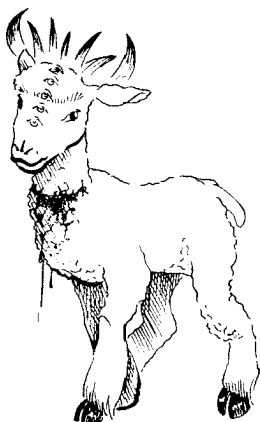
1. The elder called him the “Lion of the Tribe of Judah”
2. Genesis 49:9-10 provides background for this phrase
  - a. This passage is understood to be Messianic
  - b. A powerful ruler would come from Judah
3. A Lion is a symbol of power
4. As a result of this and other passages, Jews hoped in a powerful deliverer

C. He was a deliverer

1. The elder also called him the “Root of Jesse”
2. Isaiah 11 provides background for this
  - a. v.1-2 – A deliverer will come from the cut off people of God
  - b. v.13-15 – God would deal with the enemies of his people
  - c. v. 16 – God’s people would be delivered
3. So, the Root of Jesse is a Messianic image of hope and deliverance

D. The elder said that he had conquered – The nature of this conquering will be made clear progressively throughout the book

E. The lamb



1. John looked up and expected to see a Lion, but sees a lamb
  - a. The fact that John does not see the “Lion” does not mean that the lamb is weak
  - b. This is no ordinary lamb. This is a lion of a lamb!
2. John’s choice of words is interesting
  - a. “Amnos” is always used of a sacrificial lamb in the New Testament and never a non-sacrificial lamb
  - b. However, John consistently uses the word “arnion” in

Revelation, which does not by itself have a sacrificial overtone. Possible reasons:

- c. A possible reason for this choice of words is that the image of the “arnion” in Revelation is of conquering power, and is not limited to sacrifice (6:16; 17:14; 22:3)

### 3. Characteristics of the Lamb

- a. The lamb looked as if it had been slain
  - The arnion was killed at some point
  - Since this lamb is an arnion, and not an amnos the slaying may bring to mind death by persecution rather than death as an offering/sacrifice
  - This would have resonated with the readers, many of whom were facing death by persecution
- b. The lamb was standing – He overcame death
- c. He had seven horns
  - Horns were a symbol of power
  - The lamb was all-powerful
- d. He had seven eyes
  - John identifies them as the seven Spirits of God
  - In 4:5, it was seven lamps that represented the Spirit
  - Since eyes are a symbol of knowledge, this may once again refer to enlightenment as in 4:5
    - Col 2:3 – Jesus is all wise and knowing
  - The spirits are “sent out” to all the earth. Part of the role of the Spirit is to assist God’s people (see p.2)
  - (Zech 4:1-6) – God displays his power by the Spirit. Since this is a conquering lamb, this passage comes to mind



- 4. The fact that the Lion is a Lamb shows that God delights in displaying his power through what seems powerless.
  - a. 2 Cor 12:9 – Power is perfected in weakness
  - b. 1 Cor 1:25-27 – Weakness of God stronger than men
  - c. Deut 7:7; 9:1-3 – Israel smallest
  - d. Jud 7 – Gideon with only 300 men

F. The lamb takes the book from the one on the throne

## IV. The Role of Liturgy

- A. It is generally agreed that Jewish liturgy shaped the visions of Revelation
  - 1. The vision of heaven is in a liturgical context in chapters 4-5
  - 2. The visions often use the imagery of the Jerusalem temple
  - 3. Images of priests, incense, the altar, lampstands, etc.

- B. Some have suggested that there is evidence that the liturgy of the early church was also shaped the liturgy of Revelation.<sup>3</sup>
  - 1. John receives his vision on the "Lord's Day."
  - 2. The marriage supper of the lamb in 19:9 would be a fulfillment of the eucharist
  - 3. White robes (3:5, 18; 4:4 etc.) suggests the common Christian practice of wearing them after baptism
- C. It is also possible that Revelation shaped Christian liturgy, rather than the other way around
- D. The use of liturgy in Revelation can lead to some interesting reflections concerning the role and effect of worship for the persecuted and suffering
  - 1. Serves as a reminder of who is truly God
  - 2. Serves as a reminder of how God has delivered his people in the past
  - 3. Encourages and strengthens the participants

## V. Discussion Questions for 5:1-14

1. What was John's reaction when the scroll could not be opened? (5:4) Why do you suppose he reacted this way?
2. How did the creatures around the throne respond to the actions of the Lamb? (5:8-9) Why do you suppose they did this?
3. For what was the Lamb praised and worshipped? (5:9-10)
4. What effect would this have had on John and the readers of Revelation?
5. What effect does it have on you?
6. Why do you think the prayers of the saints appeared as "golden bowls full of incense"?
7. What is the benefit of bowing down to worship God?
8. How can we serve God as His priests?
9. How can you worship God in your private times of prayer this week?
10. How can you develop an attitude of praise and thanksgiving to God as you go throughout your day?

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<sup>3</sup> Brown, Raymond. *Introduction to the New Testament*,. (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 796-200.