

The Lion Has Overcome

📖 Revelation 5:1-14

👤 Pastor Jeremy Thomas

📅 April 9, 2017

🌐 fgbible.org

📍 Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin Street

Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

(830) 997-8834

In Revelation 4, we started the exposition of the events in heaven that precede the Tribulation judgments on earth in Revelation 6. Revelation 4 is the most majestic picture of heaven in all Scripture. Heaven is portrayed as the Supreme Headquarters of the Universe. Central to the Supreme Headquarters are the throne and the Father who sits upon the throne. The Father is seen as color; like a diamond in brilliance mixed with fire, a reminder of His holiness and justice that bring about His judgment on the earth. The emerald rainbow around His throne represents the fact that His judgment will be tempered by mercy. The Spirit of God is represented by the seven spirits of burning fire, another indication of impending judgment. Seated around the throne is the war council composed of twenty-four elders and four living creatures. The twenty-four elders sit on twenty-four thrones, and most likely represent the raptured, resurrected and rewarded Church. The four living creatures sit closest to the throne and are angels; one has a face like a lion, signifying nobility, another the face of an ox, signifying strength, another a face like a man, signifying intelligence and another the face of an eagle, signifying speed. These four angels are ready to carry out His judgments on earth with all nobility, strength, intelligence and speed. They worship Him day and night by exalting His holiness, omnipotence and eternity. This rouses the twenty-four elders to fall down and worship Him, casting their crowns of reward before the throne, pronouncing Him worthy because He created all things, because of His will they existed, and they were created.

This heavenly scene of the Supreme Headquarters of the Universe continues in Revelation 5:1, with a new item appearing. John says, in 5:1, **I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals.** The one sitting **on the throne** is the Father. What John saw was something **in** the Father's **right hand**. The Greek says it was upon His **right hand**, meaning resting upon the palm of His **right hand**. What was resting upon His palm was not a book, but **a scroll**. A **scroll** was a rolled up parchment made of papyri or vellum in the ancient world. The **scroll** had writing all over it, **inside and on the back**. Usually ancient **scrolls** only had writing on one side, because only one side was smooth, the other side was coarse. The fact that this **scroll** has writing on both sides indicates the fullness and completeness of the revelation. The **scroll** was **sealed up with seven seals**. Important documents in Rome were sealed with seven seals. The **seven seals** were probably along the edge of the rolled up **scroll** so that as the first seal was opened

the document would unroll a revelation and then stop at the second seal until it was broken. The **scroll** is mentioned seven times in this chapter making it the theme of the chapter. The contents of the **scroll**, at this time, remain a mystery, merely a sealed document sitting upon the right palm of the Father. This is the **scroll** which has its seals broken by the Lamb beginning in Rev 6:1. "Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals..." In 6:3 "He broke the second seal..." In 6:5 "He broke the third seal." In 6:7 "He broke the fourth seal..." In 6:9 "the Lamb broke the fifth seal..." In 6:12 "He broke the sixth seal..." And if you look at 8:1 you see something interesting. "When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them." In other words, the seventh seal is the seven trumpets. It contains the seven trumpets so that they are also a part of the contents of the scroll. Turn to Rev 10:7. The angels begin to sound the trumpets and when you come to Rev 10:7 you find something interesting when you get to the seventh angel. "...but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets." At this point, when the seventh angel is about to sound, "the mystery of God is finished." The "mystery of God" is the details of the judgments necessary to destroy the kingdoms of this world and to establish Christ's kingdom. This was preached in general "to His servants the prophets." It was well-known that God would destroy the kingdom of this world and establish Christ's kingdom. Daniel knew that by way of the four metal statue replaced by the stone cut out without hands. Daniel knew that by way of the four beasts judged by the Son of Man. That was not the mystery. The mystery was the details of how the kingdom of the world would be destroyed. And in particular that it would take twenty-one judgments described as seals, trumpets and bowls, all contained within this one scroll. If you turn to 11:15 you see that when the seventh angel sounds the trumpet the judgments are done. "Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever." See, at this point, the point of the seventh trumpet, the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of our Lord because even though there are still seven bowls to come, the seventh trumpet is the seven bowls, it contains the seven bowls. So the **scroll** in Rev 5, as it is gradually unrolled, reveals seven seal judgments, the last of which contains seven trumpet judgments, the last of which contains seven bowl judgments. The scroll is "the mystery of God," which now revealed shows us that the kingdom of this world will require twenty-one judgments to be totally destroyed so that Christ's kingdom can be established.

Now if you turn to Rev 10:3 you see seven other judgments. Nobody knows anything about these judgments other than what is written here. There's an angel in verse 3, "and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices. When the seven peals of thunder had spoken, "I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them." So here are seven other judgments to add to the twenty-one. The interesting thing is we have no clue what these seven judgments entail because they were sealed up. John was not permitted to write them for us. But in some way the scroll contained these seven peals

of thunder. Finally, it's possible that the **scroll** contains the duration of the kingdom revealed in Rev 20 as a thousand years, as well as the binding of Satan during that time, as well as his release after the thousand years, then the Great White Throne which is the judgment of all unbelieving dead and at last the New Heavens and New Earth. In short, then, the scroll probably contains the plan of God that will begin with the first seal in Rev 6. The plan is twenty-one or twenty-eight judgments, plus the final judgment of Satan and unbelievers, in order to bring in final peace and harmony that was lost at the Fall. Put another way, the scroll contains God's plan for bringing about the utopia that all men desire. One of the great pastor-teachers, not well-known, but excellent, was Ray Stedman. Stedman said about history that one of the chief theological questions of all time is, "What in the Sam Hill is going on here anyway?" You know, what is going on? What is the point of this world? Where is everything going? God is planning to restore the world to a utopian existence. It's clear that embedded in the heart of fallen man is the desire for this utopia, yet he cannot create it. This is seen in the search for immortality; in the past they searched for the fountain of youth, in the present they search for it by vitamins and drugs and in the future the search will be by cryopreservation and gene therapy already in the works. But man cannot undo the deleterious effects of the Fall. Solomon said, "What is crooked cannot be straightened" (Eccl 1:15). What he meant was that man cannot fix this broken world. The only one who can fix the world is God. What is in the scroll is how He is going to fix it. Stedman said, "The answer to this "theological question" is in the scroll. God will straighten out the mess that this world has become, and He will fulfill His promise of a golden Utopia where men will live without war, without crime, without hatred. There will be no death, no sorrow, and all tears will be wiped away."¹ Judgment is the message of the scroll.

The problem in verse 2 is who is finding someone who can open it? **And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to break its seals?" And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it. Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it.** John was weeping greatly because a universal search took place and no one was found who **was able to open the scroll**. If no one can open it, the world can never be fixed. It will just continue to suffer under the effects of the Fall. The requirement one must meet to open it is verse 2, one **who is worthy**. His question, **Who is worthy** sets forth the qualification **to open the book**. Verse 5 clarifies by saying the one who is worthy is one who **has overcome so as to open the scroll and its seven seals**. The one who has **overcome** is the one who has overcome death by way of resurrection, the one standing as if slain. When the search for one who had overcome began it reached to the ends of the universe and yet no one was found. This seems to be a teaching device for John. The angel is trying to get John to focus on the key personage in this chapter. Evidently others in heaven knew the One who had overcome. In verse 5 **one of the twenty-four elders said to John, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the scroll and its seven seals."** At last one is found and the focus in the throne room is no longer on the **scroll** but the One worthy to open the **scroll**. This one is described in two ways; first, as **the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah**. This description **stems** from Jacob's

prophecy in Gen 49:9-10 when he blessed each of his twelve sons. He said of Judah, "Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him up? The prophecy is that the **tribe of Judah** would have a lion-like nature. In time **Judah** did become the dominant tribe in Israel, ruling the others as a lion. The prophecy continues saying, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him *shall be* the obedience of the peoples." Judah would be the kingly line. This began with David, it would come to an end with Messiah. Messiah would be of **the tribe of Judah**. The description of Messiah as **the Root of David** comes from the prophecy of Isa 11:1. "Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit." From the house of Jesse came David. The Messiah would come from David and be like David, though greater. The greater than David is Jesus. Jesus is the one whom the elder says **has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals**. The verb **has overcome** is emphatic in the sentence. Literally it reads, "behold, He has overcome, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David." The point is to draw John's attention to the one who has overcome, Jesus, the Messiah. He overcame sin and death on the cross by resurrection, so He is seen standing as if slain. This qualified Him to open the scroll. Charles said, "The opening of the scroll is best seen as the object or purpose of Jesus' conquest" on the cross. The reason He paid the redemption price and "won the victory was to enable Him to open this scroll of destiny and its seals and implement God's purposes throughout the final stages of human history." Because He is qualified, John no longer has reason for weeping; there is one who can fix the world and restore it permanently to pre-Fall conditions.

In verse 6, John **saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth**. When it says the **Lamb** was **between the throne** it means He was in the central vicinity of the throne. In Rev 3:21 we know that when Jesus ascended and was exalted He sat down at the right hand of the Father. So here He has risen from His seated position and is **standing** at the right hand of the Father. He is described as a **Lamb standing, as if slain**. The reference to being **slain** reminds us that He was crucified. It is not the usual word used of a sacrifice. The word refers to suffering a violent death. The fact He was seen as a **Lamb** reminds us of the very first sacrificial animal. When Adam and Eve sinned and tried to cover their sin with fig leaves, God took an innocent lamb, slayed it and clothed them with its skin. This was a picture of what Messiah would do. When John the Baptizer came on the scene he pointed to Jesus and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." When Jesus was sacrificed it was at the same time the Passover lambs were being sacrificed. He is the Passover Lamb. But this **Lamb**, though as if **slain**, is seen **standing**. The reference to Him **standing** means He was resurrected from the dead. Jesus could not be held by death because He had no sin. He was dying for our sin. Afterward in heaven His death on our behalf was accepted and the Father raised Him. So the picture of the Lamb standing as if slain is a picture of His violent death and victorious resurrection.

This Lamb, however, is no typical lamb. This Lamb has **seven horns**. **Horns** represent power. In Daniel horns are used many times to represent power, such as the buck goat with two horns which represented Medo-Persia or

the ram with one horn that represented Alexander the Great. A horn came to represent kingly power. The Lamb has **seven** of them. This means He has all kingly power. The Lamb also has **seven eyes**. **Eyes** represent intelligence. The **seven eyes... are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth**. The **seven Spirits of God** could be a reference to seven angelic spirits that are sent out on missions into the earth. Or they could represent the Holy Spirit as the seven-fold Spirit of perfection sent out by Christ on Pentecost. I take it this is a reference to the Holy Spirit who the Son sent out as His agent on earth during His absence.

Having seen that Jesus is both a Lamb and a Lion we want to capitalize on this seemingly oxymoronic depiction. First, as a Lamb He is pictured in His character at His first coming, as one silent, coming to suffer for sin, just as a Lamb is silent when it goes to its shearers. Second, as a Lion He is pictured in His character at His second coming, as a mighty king, coming to reign in glory, just as a Lion is king of the jungle. Constable said, "The Lamb is a symbol of Jesus Christ at His first advent, meek and submissive to a sacrificial death as our substitute (Isa. 53:7; John 1:36; 21:15). The Lion is a symbol of Him at His second advent, powerful and aggressively judging the world in righteousness (Ps. 2)."² Walvoord noted that Jesus is referred to as a Lamb multiple times in the Revelation, but only here as a Lion. He made this observation with respect to the use of Lamb. "The purpose of the use of the term "lamb" seems to be to identify the glorified Christ of Revelation with Christ the Lamb of sacrifice in His first coming."³ In other words, the Jews held that there would be two Messiahs, one coming to suffer and another coming to reign, the use of the Lamb here as identical to the Lion is to say that there is only one Messiah, the same One who came and suffered on the cross is the One coming to reign in glory. When the Jews come to understand this text they will understand that there are not two Messiah's, one who suffered and one who will reign, but one Messiah who both suffers and reigns. Greek scholar Mounce connected the two this way, when he said, "In one brilliant stroke John portrays the central theme of NT revelation—victory through sacrifice." This couldn't be stated more simply.

In verse 7 the Lamb **came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne**. This seems to have been no problem for Him. He was qualified to take it. He came up and took it. It sounds strikingly like the throne room scene in Rev 7:13-14, where one like a Son of Man comes up to the Ancient of Days and receives a kingdom. Jesus here receives the document that contains all the judgments to evict the earthdwellers and take possession of the earth. What is seen in verse 7 is highly significant because it shows that the authority to judge has been transferred from the Father to the Son. The NT says that the Father judges no one, but all judgment is relegated to the Son. Here we see a transfer of judicial rights in heaven, as the scroll is transferred from the power and control of the Father over to the power and control of the Son. Practically this means that all the judgments that begin in Rev 6 are ultimately coming from the Son.

In verse 8, now that someone has been found who can fix this world, **the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fall down before the Lamb**. What they are doing here is taking a posture of worship. This is a time of worship because the Lamb is going to fix all the world's problems. With **four living creatures and twenty-**

four elders there are twenty-eight in all. Each of the twenty-eight are **holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense**. The **harp** is a stringed instrument commonly used in worship of God. It is commonly associated with joy in the OT Psalms. The **golden bowls full of incense** are identified as **the prayers of the saints**. **Saints** is a general term for believers in any dispensation. The **golden bowls full of incense** represent the prayers of believers from all dispensations. When we pray our prayers ascend to God. They enter the true Temple in heaven where they are kept until answered. These prayers are those of saints down through the ages who want God to judge the world. Those prayers have never been answered. They are about to begin to be answered, but even during the Tribulation this prayer will be voiced again and again until it is completely finished and the saints of all ages take the kingdom.

In verse 9 the twenty-eight beings **sing a new song saying "Worthy are You to take the scroll and to break the seals; because You were slain and You redeemed us for God by Your blood from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. And you have made them kings and priests to our God and they shall reign upon the earth."** A **new song** is sung only on an important occasion. When Moses and the Israelites passed through the Red Sea they sang a new song. Here they sing a new song because One has been found who is **Worthy...to take the scroll and to break the seals**. In other words, there is one who can fix this broken world. The way that He became qualified to **take the scroll and** unleash its measures to fix the world is stated next, **because You were slain and You redeemed us for God by Your blood from every tribe and tongue and people and nation**. The Lord Jesus Christ was **slain** violently on the cross, but in that work He redeemed us. I take it that verse 9 is sung by the twenty-four elders who represent the raptured, resurrected and rewarded Church. That is why the pronoun **us** is used. You redeemed **us**. But in verse 10 the four living creatures are singing, they are angelic beings. **And you have made them kings and priests to our God and they shall reign upon the earth**. That is why the pronoun **them** and **they** are used. The song is about redemption and only humans enjoy redemption. Therefore only the twenty-four elders who are humans can sing **You redeemed us**, while the angels sing antiphonally verse 10, **you have made them kings and priests...and they shall reign upon the earth**. We are not now reigning. Paul said to the Corinthians in 1 Cor 4, "Oh that you were kings, that we might reign with you..." but we are not now kings reigning. There is no kingdom now to reign. The kingdom is in postponement. But the kingdom is coming and we shall reign with Him. We are both kings and priests. King's rule and priest's serve. As **kings** we will rule on the earth. As **priests** we will serve God. This is all the result of Christ's redemption work. His blood has redeemed men **from every tribe and tongue and people and nation**. So verses 9-10 are four angelic beings and twenty-four human beings singing antiphonally of the redemptive work of Christ that has created a people to reign as kings and serve as priests in the kingdom on earth to come.

In verse 11 the group of twenty-eight who worship expands to include an innumerable host of angels. **And I saw, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousands of ten thousands, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud**

voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." The focal point is entirely upon **the Lamb**. He is the one who is worthy. They sing a seven-fold exaltation of what He will receive upon completion of the task of the Tribulation to remove the earthdwellers and inherit the kingdom; **power, riches, wisdom, might, honor, glory and blessing**. All these rightfully belong to Christ, the Lamb, because He has done the great work of redemption.

In verse 13 the company expands to include all beings in the created universe. **And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever."** This is the universal praise of both the Father **who sits on the throne, and to the Son**. Those who offer the praise are all beings in the created universe, whether believers or unbelievers. Just as Philippians 2:9ff teaches, "every knee will bow...and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." It is a heap of praise because the Father has a plan within the scroll and the Son is able to open the scroll and break its seals. The world is going to be made right again.

In verse 14 the picture returns to the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders. **And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped.** Chapter 4 showed us that they repeatedly worshipped in this order, with **the four living creatures** beginning the ascriptions of praise and responsively **the elders** falling **down and** worshipping. That is what we see here again. The **four living creatures kept saying, "Amen."** This word in the Greek is a transliteration of a Hebrew word which means "truly." They repeated it, "truly, truly, truly,..." so as the innumerable host of angels and every created being in the universe worships the Father and the Son, these twenty-eight ascribe truth to their worship. What they say is true. The Father and the Son are to be worshipped because the Father has a plan in the scroll to fix the world and the Son has the ability to open the scroll and break the seals and fix it.

In conclusion, the big picture is that of the scroll, which contains the measures for fixing the world. The problem in the chapter is to open the scroll and break the seals in order to fix the world. Only one is found worthy, a Lamb standing as if slain with seven horns and seven eyes signifying His sacrificial death and kingly power, who is also a Lion, and will exercise those throne rights in the future kingdom. He is worthy to open the scroll and to break its seals and to unleash the eviction measures found within. In short then, the broken state of the world can only be corrected by a Jew, the Jewish Messiah, Jesus, the root and offspring of David. The entire world's future depends upon this one Jew, the one who paid the redemption price and redeemed for God's people from every nation on earth and every language on earth to reign with Him and to serve Him in the kingdom to come. The scene of heaven described in Rev 4-5 is complete. The scene on earth below described in Rev 6-7 is next. Heaven will now unleash her judgments as the Lamb takes the scroll, breaks the seals and dispatches each of the four living creatures to bring judgment on the earth. The end result will be His kingdom come and the world to come, where everything is fixed, corrected, and made right.

¹ Ray Stedman, *God's Final Word*, 127.

² Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Re 5:6.

³ John Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 115.