



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Revelation

Chapter 5

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Introduction

In this chapter the Holy Book of Revelation explains to us the interest of heaven in the "Sealed Book"

- The Sealed Book 1-4
- The One Worthy to Open the Scroll 5-7
- Worthy Is the Lamb 8-14



The Sealed Book 5:1 – 4

- St. John had been focused on the 24 elders as they prostrated themselves before the throne of God and responded to the hymn of the 4 Living Creatures with responsive praise themselves
- Now his attention is directed to the One who sits on the throne and he sees that He holds in his right hand a scroll, a roll of parchments in the form usual in those times
- The right hand is the symbol of authority and power, *“The right hand of the LORD is exalted; The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.”* (Psalm 118:16)
- *“hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”* (Matthew 26:64)



The Sealed Book 5:1 – 4

- The Book was sealed with seven seals
- What could this book be?
- It is written, not on the inside only, as was the usual way, but, like the roll of the book which Ezekiel saw, Ezekiel 2:9-10, it was written within and without
- It indicates that it was very full of matter and events, so as it was written on all sides
- The writing on the back implies fullness and completeness, so that nothing more needs to be added (Revelation 22:18)



The Sealed Book 5:1 – 4

- *written inside and on the back*, may also indicate that some meanings are comprehensible and some are hidden
- This Book contains God's wisdom that was established before all ages, "*But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,*"
1 Corinthians 2:7
- *Seven* expresses completeness
- The book was sealed indicating it was closed very well and only God can keep it
- It may allude to seven eras or stages of the history of the church



The Sealed Book 5:1 – 4

- It may allude to the Church Seven Holy Sacraments
- It may refer to all God's covenants with us as it was costumed in the old days that any covenant must be sealed with the King's seal
- St. Jerome explained these seals in his letter to Bishop Paulinus saying, "It appeared in the Book of Revelation a sealed book with seven seals, this that when you hand it to a man learned telling him 'read this,' he will answer you, 'I cannot, for it is sealed!'"
- So many think today that they have knowledge, yet for them the Holy Book is sealed, and no one can open it unless it is through Him, who has the key of David, "*He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens*" (Revelation 3:7)



The Sealed Book 5:1 – 4

- Ibn-el-Assal says, “It is the scroll;... the symbol in the book is to acquaint God's knowledge with its content, and its abiding by what is coming.”
- Bishop Victorianus says, “This book means the Old Testament, that our Lord Jesus Christ's hands had received, He who took the judgment from the Father.”
- That is to say, fulfill the prophecies in it, since His incarnation to the day of His coming on the cloud for judgment, to reward the innocent and condemn the wicked
- As we read in Luke *“And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”* (Luke 24:27)



The Sealed Book 5:1 – 4

- All the apostles began explaining the prophecies of the Old Testament in the New Testament after the resurrection and ascension of Christ
- Matthew mentioned about 60 prophecies in his gospel and he used the word fulfilled along with these prophecies, *“and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, “Out of Egypt I called My Son.”* (Matthew 2:15)
- Origen, St. Jerome and Tikhon the African think that the sealed book is the Holy Bible with its two Testaments, for it is one book which declares God's intentions, His love to mankind, and His discipline



The Sealed Book 5:1 – 4

- Others said that the Book is the Book of Life
- The Book of Life contains the names of the saints
- They are unknown, no one knows these names who are written in the Book of Life
- *Written inside and on the back*, here may imply that there are so many numerous and countless names written in the Book of Life
- Some scholars think that the Book may also refer to the matter of men's salvation
- Men were incapable helpless powerless incompetent and unqualified to resolve the subject of their salvation



The Sealed Book 5:1 – 4

- This Book is the subject that preoccupies all heavens for the Apostle says, *Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?*
- An angel of high heavenly rank kept calling, hoping to find one who can open the book, loosen its seals, uncover its secret, and declare its objectives
- *a strong angel*, we should not think that there are some weak angels and strong angels
- They draw their strength through the Lord's great strength, *“you His angels, Who excel in strength, who do His word, Heeding the voice of His word.”* (Psalm 103:20)



The Sealed Book 5:1 – 4

- An angel endowed with great strength, as if such strength was necessary to enable him to give utterance to the loud voice of the inquiry
- An angel is introduced so mighty that his voice could be heard in all those distant worlds
- No doubt the angel knows that the book concerns mankind, their salvation, inheritance and discipline
- We must not let the word “worthy” pass as though it were simply equivalent to “strong enough”



The Sealed Book 5:1 – 4

- It seems to imply moral fitness (Romans 1:4), which is the true strength in the heavenly world
- It was not lack of intellectual capacity so much as the corruption and blemish of moral unworthiness which hindered the reading of the book
- In other word, Is any being able and fit to reveal and make known the counsels of God registered in this book, and to bring them into execution?
- The angel shouts for our sake, with desire that we reach the divine love, that the heart of God keeps for us



The Sealed Book 5:1 – 4

- *no one in heaven*, Among all the angels of God of any rank
- With regret, the angel did not find among the heavenly, or the human, or the dead, any who is worthy to read the book, or even to take a look at it
- *under the earth* , May refer to the dead or demons
- He considered under the earth is where the devil and its angels reside as it is written, “*Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit.*” (Isaiah 14:15)
- It is a symbolic expression of the lowest position they reached
- Neither angels, men, nor devils, can grasp the decrees of God
- No one can look into it unless it is opened, and none can open it unless the seals be unloosed



The Sealed Book 5:1 – 4

- It would seem as if there was a pause to see if there were any response to the proclamation of the angel
- The beloved John was helpless, and was weeping bitterly, revealing the weakness of human nature
- The Apostle is not ashamed to call attention to his tears
- It was not a failure of faith; it was the outburst of an earnest heart, to which the knowledge of God and the destinies of his fellowmen were very dear
- He wept because he saw a problem without solution
- He wept because the world and the Church were likely to be deprived of the knowledge of the contents of the book

The One Worthy to Open the Scroll 5:5-7



- One of the 24 priests comforted him with the hope that what was so mysterious would be made known
- He drew our attention to the, “True Comforter” saying, "*Behold the Lion has prevailed...*"
- There is no occasion for tears
- The object which you so much desire can be obtained
- There is one who can break those seals, and who can unroll that volume and read what is recorded there

The One Worthy to Open the Scroll 5:5-7



- Here is the source of comfort for every sensitive soul, that is destroyed by despair
- It is the victorious Lion who alone opens the book to us
- He is the victorious One, by His eternal love, represented by sacrificing Himself as a Lamb to be slain on our behalf
- Bishop Victorianus says, “There was no one who was worthy to do so among the angels of heaven, nor the human beings on earth, nor the souls of the saints in their rest, except the Lord Jesus, the Son of God alone. Of whom he said, that he saw Him a Lamb standing as if it were slain, having seven horns...”

The One Worthy to Open the Scroll 5:5-7



- *Behold, the Lion* - This undoubtedly refers to the Lord Jesus
- Why He is called a Lion, and why He is spoken of as the Lion of the tribe of Judah?
- The lion is the king of beasts, the monarch of the forest, and thus becomes a symbol of one of kingly authority and of power
- Christ has power to open the seals - as if He ruled over the universe, and all events were under His control, as the lion rules in the forest - that the name is here given to him

The One Worthy to Open the Scroll 5:5-7



- St. Cyril of Jerusalem says, “He is called Lion not for being ferocious to mankind but as a sign of His reign, His firmness and the trust in Him. He was called Lion, in contrast to our enemy the lion, who roars to devour those who are deceived by him... As the strong Lion coming from the tribe of Judah (Psalm 118:22), He saves the believers and destroys the enemy.”
- *Lion of the tribe of Judah*, doubtless, with reference to the prophecy in Genesis 49:9 “*Judah is a lion’s whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him?*”

The One Worthy to Open the Scroll 5:5-7



- This use of the term would connect Christ in the apprehension of John with the prophecy, and would suggest to him the idea of His being a ruler, or having dominion
- As such, therefore, it would be appropriate that the power of breaking these seals should be committed to Him
- *the Root of David* - It is Him "*of whom Moses ... and the prophets wrote,*" (John 1:45), He is from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:9), the Root of David (Isaiah 11:1) And He called Himself, "*I am the Root and offspring of David*" (Revelation 22:16)
- For He is the creator of David, and He became His son in the body

The One Worthy to Open the Scroll 5:5-7



- *has prevailed* - That is, He has acquired this power as the result of a conflict or struggle
- The word used here in Greek refers to such a conflict or struggle, properly meaning to come off victor, to overcome, to conquer, to subdue
- Christ's victory has this consequence, that He can open
- *to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.* - To reveal those things that are the counsels and purposes of God relating to His church, and the affairs thereof, to the world's end

The One Worthy to Open the Scroll 5:5-7



- The Evangelist is told of the Lion which will open the seals: he looks, but to his amazement, it is a Lamb!
- There is deep significance in this
- When we read of the Lion, we think of power and majesty, and we are right; all power in heaven and earth is Christ's, but it is power manifested in seeming weakness
- It is the Lamb that St. John spoke of saying, *“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”* (John 1:29)

The One Worthy to Open the Scroll 5:5-7



- The lamb is Jesus Christ who is meek and humble as the lamb, *“He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.”* (Isaiah 53:7)
- The waters of Shiloah are mightier than the Euphrates (Isaiah 8:6-8); righteousness and purity, meekness and gentleness, are greater than carnal weapons (2 Corinthians 6:6-7; Ephesians 6:11); the Lamb mightier than the roaring lion which goes about seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8)
- This Lamb is the mighty King of Kings, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah

The One Worthy to Open the Scroll 5:5-7



- The Lion, the symbol of power and authority, as St. Mark spoke of Him in his gospel
- He is also the slain lamb as St. Luke spoke of Him in his gospel
- The word "Lamb," mentioned here, meant in Greek "young lamb one year old." That is to say, the lamb of sacrifice of the sin offering (Exodus 12:7), who carried our sins in His body on the cross

The One Worthy to Open the Scroll 5:5-7



- *“who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.”* (Hebrews 7:27)
- Although He suffered and died once and for all time, the sacrifice is ongoing
- Christ continually offers Himself before the throne of God in sacrifice (as the "standing Lamb") until such a time when sin no longer exists
- His sacrifice is ongoing because sin and salvation are ongoing

The One Worthy to Open the Scroll 5:5-7



- He is "standing," never ceases working to accomplish the salvation of all His children
- He is "standing," as the Mediator for atonement in front of the Father, offering His Blood as an atonement of our sins, in order not to die in them
- *as though it had been slain* - The wound-marks are there, but the lamb is not dead
- It is standing, for it represents Him, He, who though died, is alive for evermore; but the signs of suffering and death are visible, it is the suffering Lamb, which is exalted; it is the Christ crucified, which is the power of God

The One Worthy to Open the Scroll 5:5-7



- Seven horns - As horn is the symbol of power, and seven the number of perfection, the seven horns may denote the all-prevailing and infinite might of Jesus Christ
- He can support all his friends; He can destroy all his enemies; and He can save to the uttermost all that come unto God through Him
- *The seven eyes*, To denote His infinite knowledge and wisdom
- But as these seven eyes are said to be the seven Spirits of God, they seem to denote rather His providence, in which He often employs the ministry of angels; therefore, these are said to be sent forth into all the earth

The One Worthy to Open the Scroll 5:5-7



- He sent The Holy Spirit to the Church to guide her
- He works with the fullness of His power, to purify, sanctify, and to adorn her with the divine virtues
- And to enlighten her with the abundance of divine light, in the way of salvation, until she passes through this world, without being soiled by corruption

The One Worthy to Open the Scroll 5:5-7



- This Lamb with seven horns and seven eyes, having been slain, and having prevailed with his Father to open this book, mentioned Revelation 5:1, of all the secrets, counsels, and purposes of God relating to his church, He came and took it of His Father, in whose right hand it was, as Revelation 5:1
The Lamb conquered; He came; He has taken the roll
- He is the wisdom of the Church; all things will be reconciled in Him; the purpose and meaning of all life's mysteries and sorrows will be made plain in Him 1 Corinthians 1:24; Ephesians 1:9-10; Colossians 1:18
- *No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. (John 1:18)*



Worthy Is the Lamb 5:8 - 14

- Once He took the book, all came to thank the Lord with joy and praise, expressing their praise in different ways: bowing, praying, playing the harps, offering incense, and singing new hymns
- It is not the Church alone which is interested in the revelation which will throw light on life's mysteries and the delay of the kingdom: the whole creation groans, waiting for the reign of righteousness, Romans 8:22; and therefore the four living beings, who represent creation, join with the elders, who represent the Church, in the worship of the Lamb who holds the secret of life's meaning in His hand

Worthy Is the Lamb 5:8 - 14



- Their kneeling is to confirm Christ's divinity
- The harp was a well-known instrument used in the service of God in the Old Testament
- It is perhaps more natural to suppose that *golden bowls*, were in the hands of the 24 elders, and not of the living creatures
- The use of the incense in our church is biblical as we read in Malachi 1:11, "*For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; In every place incense shall be offered to My name, And a pure offering; For My name shall be great among the nations, ' Says the LORD of hosts.*"



Worthy Is the Lamb 5:8 - 14

- *among the Gentiles; In every place*, This prophecy was about the New Testament which opened the door of salvation and faith to the gentiles and the incense is offered in every place not only in Jerusalem as in the Old Testament
- The prayers are compared to incense, *“Let my prayer be set before You as incense,”* (Psalm 141:2)
- Here, then, we have the praises (represented by the harps), and the prayers (represented by the censers) of the world-wide and age-long Church of Christ
- The whole verse signifies the prayers and praises

Worthy Is the Lamb 5:8 - 14



- *the prayers of the saints*, That the incense that is offered before God is not only the prayers of the heavenly creation, but also the prayers of His children, the saints
- These prayers are lifted up through the prayers and the intercession of the heavenly before His glory
- Therefore, the church teaches us to end our prayers by asking the intercession of the departed saints who are in the presence of God



Worthy Is the Lamb 5:8 - 14

- The idea of the *a new song*, is known since the Old Testament, “*Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! Sing to the LORD, all the earth.*” (Psalm 96:1)
- In the Old Testament references the *a new song* celebrates the creation of the Old Covenant Church and announces the promise that the Messiah will bring salvation to the nations
- “*Sing to the LORD a new song, And His praise from the ends of the earth ... The LORD shall go forth like a mighty man; He shall stir up His zeal like a man of war. He shall cry out, yes, shout aloud; He shall prevail against His enemies.*” (Isaiah 42:10-13)



Worthy Is the Lamb 5:8 - 14

- *“Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! For He has done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory. The LORD has made known His salvation; His righteousness He has revealed in the sight of the nations. He has remembered His mercy and His faithfulness to the house of Israel; All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.”* (Psalm 98:1-3)
- As we pray and praise God everyday, we also praise Him with new hymns and new psalms
- Not with new words and letters, or with new expressions, but we present them every day with a new taste and new sweetness, as if it was the first time we enjoy them, thanking Him



Worthy Is the Lamb 5:8 - 14

- St. Augustine says, “The old man's praise is old, and the new man's praise is new. The praise of he who loves the earth is old, and he who loves heavens sings a new song of praise. Love is new and everlasting. It does not get old, so it stays always new.”
- As Tertullian says, that it is a praise of thanksgiving. Its subject is the incarnation of the Lord, His suffering, His resurrection, and His new goodness towards us in every moment. All these matters are beyond time limit to which we are bound; We live in it and comprehend it forever.



Worthy Is the Lamb 5:8 - 14

- They acknowledge Christ worthy to be entrusted with His church, and the revelations of the counsels of God, with relation to it, to open them
- Because He had redeemed His church, scattered over all the world, from sin, death, and hell, unto God, to serve Him, and to live for ever with Him, and that with no less price than His own blood; Wherefore God has exalted him, *“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,”* (Philippians 2:9)

Worthy Is the Lamb 5:8 - 14



- The 4 living creatures and the 24 elders were not in need of salvation
- It appears, therefore, that they represent the Christian Church in all nations, and among all kinds of people, and perhaps through the whole compass of time
- This confirms what the faith of our orthodox church in regards to the value of intercession and the relationship between the struggling church and the conquered and heavenly church



Worthy Is the Lamb 5:8 - 14

- We praise Him, because He united us to Him as members of His secret body, and He gave us all that is His
- As King of kings we became kings, through Him
- As the Bishop of our souls, we became priests who reign with Him, and inherit the new land of the living, which is heaven itself
- He has made us spiritual kings reigning over our will and our lust offering our bodies to Him as living sacrifice acceptable through determination, striving, and obeying His commandments
- His death made the priests of the New Covenant do not offer animal sacrifices, but the most high in honor the sacrifice of our Lord's body and blood

Worthy Is the Lamb 5:8 - 14



- In response to the praise of the 4 living creatures and the 24 elders, the host of heaven joins in this song of praise
- The number of angels chanting in praise of the Lamb is a symbolic number for a countless number of angles
- The angels participated in praise on His birthday, and came the night of His crucifixion, to offer Him glory at the garden of Gethsemane
- They appeared in the empty tomb and at the resurrection, and there they are in heaven, praising the Lamb standing as if it were slain, for the salvation of mankind!



Worthy Is the Lamb 5:8 - 14

- It is the Lamb mentioned Revelation 5:6, with seven horns and seven eyes; Jesus Christ
- The doxology is seven-fold
- He is worthy of those horns He wears, emblems of power and strength given unto Him; for all power was given Him in heaven and earth
- And of those seven eyes He has, i.e. of the spirit of wisdom, Isaiah 11:2, the riches of grace and wisdom
- And of all the reverence, honor, worship, glory, praise, blessing, and obedience, which people can give Him

Worthy Is the Lamb 5:8 - 14



- Power...omnipotence; for He is the only victor, who conquers and who grants victory
- Riches...Beneficence; for He became poor to make us, His children, rich by His poverty
- Wisdom...Omniscience; He became ignorant among mankind, to redeem the humble and the meek with the ignorance of the cross
- Strength... He became weak to support our weakness

Worthy Is the Lamb 5:8 - 14



- Dignity...The highest reputation for what He has done and He emptied Himself of dignity, to make the earthly participate in His heavenly dignity
- Glory...The praise due to such actions; He carried our shame, taking our sins in His body, so that we may be glorified in Him and through Him
- Blessing...He bowed to carry our curse, that we may be blessed through Him; also the thankful acknowledgments of the whole creation

Worthy Is the Lamb 5:8 - 14



- Christ is worthy to inherit all things in heaven and on earth as we hear in the continuation of the song in the next verse
- The Church trains us to say this praise in our prayers
- We sing it at the end of the Lord's prayer saying: "for the kingdom, power and glory are yours," and at the end of the Thanksgiving prayer, "from whom are glory, dignity, honor and worship..."
- It is also said in most of the prayers and praises



Worthy Is the Lamb 5:8 - 14

- The third chorus: the chorus of the universe
- The song of the redeemed, echoed by the hosts of angels, is now merged in the utterance of all
- All creation witnesses to the Lord, the Redeemer, and praises Him for every deed
- Because by Him all things were created
- We find the whole creation gives precisely the same praise, and in the same terms, to Jesus Christ, who is undoubtedly meant here by the Lamb just slain as they give to God who sits upon the throne



Worthy Is the Lamb 5:8 - 14

- As St. Ephram says, “All creation became mouths, proclaiming for Him: The wise men with their offerings, the sterile woman with her child, and the shining star in the air! The highest heaven is opened to the Son of the King, the water was calmed, the dove glorified Him, the angels announced Him, and the children shouted to Him ‘Hosanna.’ All the voices from the highest and from under, all shout witnessing to Him! And as in the past, the hard earth and the highest heaven were to witness to the heart hardness of the Jews (Isaiah 1:2), they still witness to the work of His love for mankind.”



Worthy Is the Lamb 5:8 - 14

- Amen, the formal confirmation and conclusion of the hymn of praise is uttered by the *four living creatures* acknowledging that what was attributed to Christ was His due
- But after the Amen has been uttered, nothing else remains for the elders than silent adoration falling down on their knees, and then prostrated themselves before the throne
- This worship naturally, is directed also to the Lamb, and not alone to the One sitting on the throne
- The universe recognizes the Lamb's kingship and the eternal glory of God through Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God



Worthy Is the Lamb 5:8 - 14

- *“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*
(Philippians 2:9-11)



Discussion

- Why does John mention a *“right hand?”* Who is the one that sits on the throne? What is the purpose of the *“book”* (“scroll”)? How is the scroll in Ezekiel 2:10 similar? Why is it *“written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals”* (Daniel 12:4,9)?
- Who is this *“strong angel”*? What does the strong angel’s *“loud voice”* indicate? Why is opening the book conditioned upon *“worthiness?”*
- Why did John begin to *“weep greatly”*?

Discussion



- What do the titles “*the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah*” and the “*the Root of David*” mean?
- Why does heaven sing a “*new song*” represent? In this song the Lamb receives honor as being worthy in view of four things. What are these four things and why are they significant?
- Why does this chapter close with universal praise to the Father and the Son?