

Worthy is the Lamb

Revelation 5:1-14 *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. ² Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" 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. ⁴ So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. 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." 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. ⁷ Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. 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.*

Who owns more land on this planet than any other individual? From a political standpoint, the answer is Queen Elizabeth II, who owns 6600 million acres of land, including the land of 31 other states. Coming in at second place is King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, who owns 550 million acres. The acreage of the whole globe is around 37 billion, so even Queen Elizabeth owns less than twenty percent of it.

But there one man who had the title deed to every acre of land on this earth. He was the first man, Adam. To him, and to his descendants, God said, **Genesis 1:28** *"Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

Adam had the title deed to the Earth, and I don't doubt, to every planet and star in the universe, which after all, were created around and for the Earth. In order to live in the blessing of multiplying and ordering the world for God's glory, man simply had to obey God. There was only one restriction: don't eat of one tree. There was nothing particularly special about that tree, except that it was the one test of submission through a negative command, through a prohibition. Everything else was positive.

When Satan tempted Adam and Eve, he was calling on them to join him in a rebellion against the ultimate owner and Creator of the universe. And in joining with Satan, there was a sense in which Satan became the rebel king of this world. Humanity would now live in a cursed world, and in a world where the rebel king ruled humanity through cruelty – through sin and the fear of death.

Satan was attempting a huge thing in tempting humanity to fall. If he could get the human race to fall into sin, then God would have two choices: accept that his plans for humanity had been thwarted, in which case God would not be God, or accept the rebellion and sin and not judge it, in which God would not be God. Either way, Satan would gain a rebel claim to the title deed.

The Bible tells us not only how this war started, but how it will end. The book of Revelation ties up what began in Eden.

Genesis	Revelation
Heavens/earth created, and then scarred by sin	New heavens & new earth
No curse, but then enters with sin	Sin removed and no more curse
Tree of life in Eden	Tree of life in New Jerusalem
No sin, then it enters	Sin punished and eliminated forever
Naked in innocence	Clothed in righteousness
God in heaven visiting earth	God living together with man on the New Earth.

Adam is to rule the earth, but falls	Mankind rules and reigns with Christ forever
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So the book of Revelation is a highly symbolic description of the way God winds up history for His glory.

Revelation 4 and 5 is all about the title deed to the universe. These chapters are the foundation from which the book is built. You don't get the glorious ending in chapter 21 and 22 without chapters 4 and 5.

I. The Importance of the Title -Deed

The scroll has seven seals. As He breaks each of the seals, a judgement is unleashed – war, famine, widespread death, martyrdom, earthquake. When the final seal is broken, which would mean the scroll is now open, seven angels with trumpets appear. As each trumpet is blown, judgements are poured down on the earth. As each trumpet is blown it unfolds some more judgement on the earth – more events, like weather disasters, changes in the water, changes in the sun and moon, plagues by creatures. When the seventh trumpet is blown, Satan is cast out of heaven, and seven angels with bowls appear. They begin to pour out their bowls, one by one, unleashing the worst possible judgements on earth imaginable.

The seven seals release seven trumpets which release seven bowls; each of these release judgements, and the final one brings man's rebellion to an end. But it all started with the scroll, and the seals being broken. We know the scroll has something to do with the world and human destiny.

In whose hand does verse 1 tell us the scroll is? Him who sits on the throne. Who is that? God Himself. God the Father. Then in verse 6 and 7, we see the Lamb. Who is the Lamb? We'll come back to this image, but we know it is a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. And Jesus comes up to the Father and receives the scroll from the Father's right hand. That should make us think of some verse spoken thousands of years ago.

Psalm 2:6-9 *Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion." ⁷ "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. ⁸ Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession. ⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' "*

What does the Father give the Son? The nations – the ends of the earth.

Psalm 110:1-7 *The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool." ² The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies! ³ Your people shall be volunteers In the day of Your power; In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, You have the dew of Your youth. ⁴ The LORD has sworn And will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek." ⁵ The Lord is at Your right hand; He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath. ⁶ He shall judge among the nations, He shall fill the places with dead bodies, He shall execute the heads of many countries. ⁷ He shall drink of the brook by the wayside; Therefore He shall lift up the head.*

What does the LORD give to the Lord? Victory over His enemies. Complete victory over those who oppose Him. And if there is no one left to oppose Him, what does He then get? Unchallenged Kingship.

The scroll represents **total ownership of the creation**. It is the title deed to the universe. Written on both sides is every single created person, every event, every thing in time and space from the beginning of beginnings to the end of ends.

II. The Impossible Requirements of the Deed-Holder

Not only so, but when the scroll is produced, a search begins to find someone with the necessary credentials to open it. Three worlds are searched: Hell ('under the earth') is searched, to see if someone forgotten under the judgement of their sin might be the right person to open the scroll. Then the entire earth is searched, to see if any living human was worthy to open it, or even look at it. Heaven is searched, all the redeemed, are scanned to see if they have the authority to open the scroll. No moral creature since the creation of the universe meets the criteria to open this scroll.

Why? What do they need to be? The title deed was meant for Adam. But Adam sinned and forfeited it. What is needed is a Second Adam, who was truly human, and yet able to face Satan's temptations. What was needed was a man who could take Satan on in fair combat, refuse his offers, and then, once proved innocent, die for Adam's offspring. Then He needed to be alive to come and claim to title deed-Holder.

You needed a truly Holy Man, one who had faced all the things Satan threw at Adam – sin, lies and death, and this Man could take the scroll. You needed someone who was truly one of Adam's race, and yet without Adam's sin nature and guilt. A man who did not deserve to die, and who was not under the curse, who had yet dealt with the curse.

You would need to be God to face Satan and win. You would need to be God and Man in one.

This helps us to understand why John wept when no one was found worthy to open the scroll. John knew that if no one had the authority to open the seals, then the world must simply continue under its satanic rule. Remember when Jesus was tempted? Satan took Him up into a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

Luke 4:6 ⁶ *And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.*

Jesus didn't dispute Satan's claim, He simply refused to worship him.

But if no one was worthy to take the title deed and open it up – then Satan's rule of the earth would have continued indefinitely. God's glorious plan of redemption could never be completed unless the scroll could be opened. Death and sin and pain and suffering must continue indefinitely. Hell must essentially consume the world.

John's tender heart sees the consequences immediately. A world with no love, a world where goodness is a forgotten memory, where beauty is lost, where every man's desire to be first wars with every other man's desire to be first.

If you understand thus far, you should realise that if the resurrection did not happen, we should now be in John's place – weeping.

III. The Invincible Lamb

Fortunately, one of the elders brings comfort. He says, “Do not weep – look, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll.”

John looks, and instead of a Lion, he sees a Lamb. This is the title given to Jesus throughout the book of Revelation, at least twenty-six times, He is called by this title. In the prime of His youth, He was killed, as the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world. And since He has triumphed, He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He is a lamb like Lion, and a lion like Lamb. Seven horns – perfect strength. Seven eyes, perfect knowledge. Seven spirits – perfect presence. Omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence. Who alone has these attributes? God. The Lamb is very God of very God, begotten not made.

Here is the Creator and the Second Adam in one person. He has made this world, but He has also become one of its people, and done what Adam could not do, and then died to make atonement for Adam.

Now remember what seals meant in the ancient world. If a document was sealed, no one but the person authorised to break a seal of such authority could open it. And in the case of a title deed or will, only the appointed heir could open it. So the Lamb comes up to the throne, and receives the scroll, as a son receives His inheritance from His Father's own hand.

And heaven explodes.

Everyone in heaven knows what this means. The Second Adam is present amongst them. The Second Adam has not given up on His inheritance. The Second Adam is about to take back what is His for His Bride and for His glory. The squatter is about to be evicted. Sin is about to be eradicated. Prince Jesus is about to mount His white horse and ride on to take back His kingdom. And He is going to take it back on behalf of those who lost it – Adam's race.

As Revelation progresses, you see this idea coming out in the praises sung in heaven:

Revelation 11:15 *Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"*

Revelation 19:1-6 " ⁶ And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters

and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"

Jesus takes the title deed, because He has both made the world, and earned the world. And as He takes it, He is showing His might and His right to rule the universe.

Why is He alone worthy to open it?

In verse 9, the song sung gives us the answer.

He has prevailed over sin and death.

They are singing 'you were slain', past tense. The Lamb truly had died. But they are singing to Him now as one alive in the present.

In verse 6, when John sees Jesus, He says there stood a Lamb as though it had been slain. But now it is standing. Now He comes and takes the scroll. He has the marks of a Lamb slaughtered, but is alive.

The rebel king of this world brought sin, and with sin, death. Unless sin and death could be dealt with, the world would stay in perpetual night.

***Hebrews 2:14-15** Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

The Lamb went down - down into the sea of humanity, taking it upon Himself, precariously facing its temptations – like Adam did, but this time passing the test. Facing the fire of rejection, anonymity, misunderstanding, humiliation, he went on with the rescue. And then He went in where we lost sight of Him – into the fire of God's wrath on the cross, into the black depths of bearing the weight of the sin of the world. And three days later, He burst forth, with His prize, the price paid, the penalty paid, the believers bought and saved. He has prevailed.

You see if Jesus had not risen, it would mean one thing. He had not paid for our sins. If the grave had held Jesus, it would have meant that He was as guilty as the rest of us, and the wages of sin is death, so He would be in the grave, experiencing death like the rest of humanity. He would have been as much a failure as the First Adam. But if the grave refused Him, it would mean He had no sin. Like when the machines spit out the wrong coin, or refuse to recognise it. The grave would spit out an innocent man. Death would say to an innocent man, you owe me nothing, you don't belong here – go back to life. And that would mean Jesus truly paid for our sins. Salvation has been accomplished. Death has been defeated. Satan's kingdom has been fatally wounded. He has prevailed.

He has purchased back what is His.

The song they sing says 'you have redeemed us to God by your blood'.

In the Law of Moses, there was a kind provision made for widows and orphans. Since their husband and father was now gone, there was every likelihood that they would lose their inheritance, their land, their properties and possessions. So the Lord set up a law known as the kinsman-redeemer. If a man was a near relative to her lost husband, and willing, he could marry the widow, and buy back what would have been lost. He gains a wife and saves her inheritance.

But you can see the redeemer had to meet certain qualifications. He had to be kin with her original husband, so the inheritance could remain in the same name. He had to be willing to do so – to take upon himself the burden of supporting her and her children. He had to be able to do so. He had to

have the means to buy back anything lost – like Boaz who bought back the land which Naomi had lost. He had to be alive, because a dead redeemer is no redeemer at all.

We were indeed like a widow losing her inheritance. Our sin had caused us to forfeit the inheritance of ruling the world to reflect the glory of God. Our Lord Jesus became kin to us, taking up humanity into Himself forever. He is now forever of our family, of Adam. He was willing to redeem, willing to go to death itself. He was able to do so because the price was full payment of our sin debt, and full imputation of righteousness.

He rose from the dead, as a living Redeemer – to apply the price He had paid, and claim back the people He loved, and the world He had made.

Romans 5:19 ¹⁹ *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.*

He was worthy to take up the scroll because He made the world, died for the world and rose again, vindicated. He owns the world twice.- as its creator, and as its redeemer.

So take out the resurrection, and Revelation ends at chapter 5:4. John weeping, because no one is present to open the scroll. Jesus turns out to be one of many false messiahs. The world continues its sad march to the grave. The wars, famines, cruelty, wickedness continue their meaningless cycles, with no end in sight. The cloud of Satan's rule covers the sky with its blackness, and man serves Satan, with rigour - a bitter life in hard bondage.

But include the resurrection, and you can go on reading. The judgements unfold. Events come to a climax. Eventually Jesus Himself returns, setting up His kingdom, ruling and reigning for a thousand years, eventually creating a new heaven and a new earth.

"There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: 'Mine!'" --Abraham Kuyper

A Greek legend tells of a Sphinx that would ask travellers a riddle. Whoever got the answer wrong, would be slain. In the legend, Oedipus came to the Sphinx, and it asked the riddle, “ What creature walks in the morning on four feet, at noon upon two, and the evening on three.” Oedipus knew the answer: Man – in childhood he crawls on hands and knees, in manhood, he walks on his two feet, and in old age walks with a stick. The Sphinx, when she heard the correct answer, cast herself down and perished.

For centuries, Satan has stood like the Sphinx and asked this riddle: Who can be a man like Adam, but not sin like Adam? Who can be from Adam, but not cursed like Adam? Who can die like Adam, but not die because of Adam? Who can live again to raise Adam?

The answer is: The God-Man, who prevailed, and purchased His own.

The resurrection of Jesus is not equal to or the same as the resurrection of Lazarus. The resurrection of Jesus is not the same as the resurrection of Jairus' daughter, or the widow's son met in the funeral procession at Nain. The resurrection of Jesus is not the same as the raising of Dorcas by Peter, the raising of Eutychus by Paul.

The future of the universe did not depend on their resurrection. The title deed to the universe did not depend on their resurrections. Satan's defeat and the victory of sin, death and the curse did not depend on their resurrections. But all of this and more hinged on Christ's resurrection. This is why

this song rings out in Heaven:

Revelation 5:11-14 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.