

REVELATION 5

Rev. 5:1

- βιβλίον - here, indicates a “scroll.” Seals were put upon scrolls in that day. Thus, the depictions of this as a codex (book) in iconography does not really get the true sense. The scroll with seven seals represents the fact that God is in control of human history. It is only when Christ opens the seals that things happen. History is moved forward at the hand of the Lamb. It is not the great historical figures that moves history along, but it is God, who is in total control of all earthly happenings.

Rev. 5:2-3

- ἀνοῖξαι, λύσαι - these infinitives help explain the verbal action and are connected to “worthy.” There is no verb in the sentence and it has to be supplied – “Who *is* worthy to open and to loose?”
- The fact that no one in heaven or on earth, none of the strong angels, no one, is able to loose the seals and open the scroll. In fact, no one is able even to look upon it. All of this emphasizes the uniqueness of the Lamb, the Son of God, who is the only One worthy and able to break the seals.

Rev. 5:4-5

- John weeps because no one was found worthy to open the scroll. But, he is told by one of the elders to weep not, for “the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered to open the scroll and its seven seals.” This is Messianic language and would hit home for the Jews. Jesus, the Lamb, is the Messiah, the Christ.

Rev. 5:6

- The Lamb is “in the midst of the throne,” which marks the full identity of this Lamb with YHWH. The Lamb is the visible image of YHWH – you don’t see God’s unveiled presence, but you do see Christ.
- “Horns” = power; 7 horns = complete power; “eyes” = knowledge; 7 eyes = perfect knowledge. Thus, Christ (the Lamb) is all-powerful and all-knowing, i.e., He is YHWH.

Rev. 5:7-8

- The Lamb is worthy to take the scroll, break its seals, and open it. When He takes the scroll, the living creatures and elders fall down before Him in worship. The Lamb is to be worshipped, for He is YHWH.
- The 24 elders offer incense, the prayers of the saints – temple cult imagery; the 24 orders of priests.

Rev. 5:9

- “Because you were slain and redeemed (purchased) for God by means of Your blood (people) from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” – Christ is not only depicted as the Passover Sacrificial Lamb, but also as the Yom Kippur

Sacrifice – the Atoning Sacrifice. This is awesome justification imagery – Christ redeemed the world by means of His blood (universal justification).

Rev. 5:10

- “A Kingdom and priests . . . rule upon the earth” – *“For the royal priesthood of God’s saints is an image, a living picture of the royal priesthood of Christ, a priesthood for the salvation of all people by his own blood and through the proclamation of the Gospel (cf. Heb. 4:14-5:10; 9:11-28; 10:19-25). And the priestly reign of God’s people on earth is not some future happening, but it is active now through the proclamation of God’s Word (see Rev. 10:11). The royal priestly reign of Christ, the kingdom of God, is not some future event but is present now, though its present and future glory and its manifestations to the human race are not yet visible, for the reign of Christ is seen now only through faith” (Brighton, 142).*

Rev. 5:11-14

- “Voice of many angels . . . ten thousands of ten thousands . . . and all creation” – The heavenly host and all creation join in praise – *“When comparing the two stanzas of praise, the first to God the Creator (4:11) and the second to the Lamb (5:12), one finds that the same ascriptive words of praise are used in both: ‘glory,’ ‘honor,’ and ‘power.’ But to the Christ further words of praise are ascribed: ‘wealth,’ ‘wisdom,’ ‘strength,’ and ‘blessing.’ These additional words of worship and praise are given to the Son of God because he merited and earned them in his earthly life of humiliation, suffering and death, and by his glorious resurrection” (Brighton, 143).* The One sitting on the throne and the Lamb are both given equal praise and glory – an awesome identification of Christ as YHWH.

EXCURSUS: WHEN DID THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST TAKE PLACE?

- *“Revelation 4 and 5 are a dramatization of the exaltation of Jesus Christ at the right hand of God, as it appeared from heaven’s view. The description of Acts 1:6-11 is from the perspective of those on earth. We thus have two complementary visual descriptions of Christ’s ascension. As the disciples saw the Lord taken up from them to disappear into the heavens, at the same time Jesus was received by his heavenly Father, as pictured in Revelation 4 and 5 . . . What John sees in Revelation 4 and 5 is a reenactment of that which, in earthly time, had taken place some years before, at the Mount of Olives (Lk. 24:50-51). However, the celebration that began and was initiated at the Lord’s enthronement was still going on when John saw the dramatization of it. And the celebration is still going on and will continue into eternity” (Brighton, 145).*