Revelation 5

The Lion Who Is a Lamb: Worthy Is the Lamb

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."
Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

History is a sealed book, and no one is good enough to open it — no angel, no king, no man. Then the Lamb who was slain steps forward and takes it, and all of heaven and earth breaks into song. The One who holds the future is the One who bled for me.

Ed Smith · Started 20 October 2026

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00 The Text

REVELATION 5 (KJV), MARKED

▲ **Gold** God — His character & actions
Green Command / instruction
Sky Key repeated word
⚠ **Rose** Sin / warning
★ **Violet** Promise / blessing
Amber Time / place / contrast

[1] And I saw ▲ in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

[2] And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

[3] And ⚠ no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

[4] And ⚠ I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

[5] And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, ▲ the Lion of the tribe of Juda, ▲ the Root of David, ★ hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

[6] And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood ▲ a Lamb as it had been slain, having ▲ seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

[7] And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

[8] And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and ★ golden vials full of odours, which are ★ the prayers of saints.

[9] And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for ▲ thou wast slain, and ★ hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of ★ every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

[10] And hast made us unto our God ★ kings and priests: and ★ we shall reign on the earth.

[11] And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts 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 that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, 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, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

[14] And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

Marked in the text

- **v1** ▲ in the right hand of him that sat on the throne
- **v1** sealed with seven seals
- **v1** book *(every occurrence)*
- **v2** Who is worthy to open the book

- **v2** ⇄ worthy *(every occurrence)*
- **v3** ⚠ no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth
- **v4** ⚠ I wept much
- **v5** ❚❚ Weep not
- **v5** ▲ the Lion of the tribe of Juda
- **v5** ▲ the Root of David
- **v5** ★ hath prevailed
- **v6** ▲ a Lamb as it had been slain
- **v6** ▲ seven horns and seven eyes
- **v7** ▲ took the book
- **v8** ❚❚ fell down before the Lamb
- **v8** ★ golden vials full of odours
- **v8** ★ the prayers of saints
- **v9** ⇄ a new song
- **v9** ▲ thou wast slain
- **v9** ★ hast redeemed us to God by thy blood
- **v9** ★ every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation
- **v10** ★ kings and priests
- **v10** ★ we shall reign on the earth
- **v11** ◷ ten thousand times ten thousand
- **v12** ▲ Worthy is the Lamb that was slain
- **v13** ◷ every creature
- **v14** ❚❚ worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. Quotations in the notes are from the NASB95, so their wording may differ from the KJV above.

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · REVELATION 5:5 (KJV)

5 And one of the elders saith unto me, ❚❚ Weep not: behold, ▲ the Lion of the tribe of Juda, ▲ the Root of David, ★ hath prevailed to open the ⇄ book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

Setting

John is still in the throne room of chapter 4. The same throne, the same elders, the same living creatures — but now his eyes go to the right hand of the One on the throne, and to what is in it. Chapter 4 worships God as Creator; chapter 5 worships the Lamb as Redeemer.

Structure

- vv1–4 — **the sealed book and the search:** in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne, "a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals" (v1). "A strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?'" (v2). But "no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it" (v3). John says, "I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy" (v4).
- vv5–7 — **the Lion who is a Lamb:** an elder says, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals" (v5). John turns and sees "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" (v6). "He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne" (v7).

- vv8–10 — **the new song:** the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fall down before the Lamb, "each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints" (v8). "And they sang a new song": the Lamb is worthy, "for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (v9). "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth" (v10).
- vv11–12 — **the angels join:** around the throne, "myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands" (v11), 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" (v12).
- vv13–14 — **all creation joins:** "every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea" says, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever" (v13). "And the four living creatures kept saying, 'Amen.' And the elders fell down and worshiped" (v14).

Repeated words

book (vv1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9); seals (vv1, 2, 5, 9); worthy (vv2, 4, 9, 12); Lamb (vv6, 8, 12, 13); throne (vv1, 6, 7, 11, 13); elders (vv5, 6, 8, 11, 14); slain (vv6, 9, 12); in heaven / on the earth / under the earth (vv3, 13); seven (vv1, 5, 6).

Contrasts

no one worthy (vv3–4) ⟷ the Lamb is worthy (vv9, 12). John weeping (v4) ⟷ "Stop weeping" (v5). John is told of a Lion (v5) ⟷ he sees a Lamb (v6). "As if slain" (v6) ⟷ standing (v6). No one in heaven, earth or under the earth able to open (v3) ⟷ every creature in heaven, earth, under the earth and sea praising (v13). Worship of God as Creator (4:11) ⟷ worship of the Lamb as Redeemer (5:9).

Chapter theme (my words)

History is a sealed book, and no one is good enough to open it — no angel, no king, no man. Then the Lamb who was slain steps forward and takes it, and all of heaven and earth breaks into song. The One who holds the future is the One who bled for me.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · REVELATION 5:9 (KJV)

9 And they sung ⇄ a new song, saying, Thou art ⇄ worthy to take the ⇄ book, and to open the seals thereof: for ▲ thou wast slain, and ★ hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of ★ every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

What is the book? (v1)

A scroll written on both sides and sealed with seven seals — each seal had to be broken before the whole could be read. Guzik surveys the views: Scripture, a decree against Israel, the sentence on the

church's enemies, the text of Revelation, or the title deed to the earth (compare the sealed deed of Jer 32:9–14). He calls the title deed view "an attractive idea" but hard to prove. He settles on Barclay's broader view: the scroll is God's final settlement of the affairs of the universe — history written in advance, held in God's hand, waiting to be carried out. Walvoord, in Guzik, connects it with the way Roman wills were sealed. Either way, the point is the same: the future is not loose. It is written, and it is in His hand.

Who is worthy? (vv2–4)

The question is not who is strong enough but who is *worthy*. Every creature everywhere is searched, and no one qualifies. Guzik: no creature can determine its own destiny; someone above creation must unfold history. John weeps because, if no one can open the book, the story never ends — evil is never judged and God's people are never vindicated.

The Lion is a Lamb (vv5–7)

The elder announces a Lion — the royal Messiah of Judah (Gen 49:9–10) and the Root of David (Isa 11:1, 10; Rev 22:16). John turns and sees a Lamb. Guzik notes, with Clarke, that the word means a little lamb. This is the heart of the gospel: the Lion conquers *as* the Lamb. He "has overcome" (v5) by being slain (v9). The Lamb is "standing, as if slain" — wounded and alive. Guzik: there is nothing "stale or outworn" in Christ's sacrifice; it is as fresh before God now as the day it was offered. Seven horns speak of complete power; seven eyes, of complete knowledge — "the seven Spirits of God" (Zech 4:10). Then the Lamb takes the book from the Father's hand (v7). The cross gave Him the right.

Harps and bowls (v8)

The harps are for praise. The golden bowls of incense "are the prayers of the saints" (Ps 141:2). Guzik is careful: the elders present the prayers, they don't answer them or mediate them. There is "one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2:5). None of the prayers of God's people are lost; they are kept in gold before the throne — and in chapter 8 they rise again before God, and fire is thrown to the earth in answer (8:3–5).

The new song (vv9–10)

Guzik notes that Roman emperors were greeted with the Latin acclamation *vere dignus*, "truly worthy." Here the real King receives the cry. The song tells the whole gospel: You were slain (the cost), purchased for God (the purpose), with Your blood (the price), from every tribe and tongue and people and nation (the reach). Then the result: a kingdom and priests who will reign (Exod 19:6; 1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:6). Guzik quotes Spurgeon on the priesthood of all believers — no other priest is needed between a believer and God. The KJV reads "us … we shall reign"; the NASB and most modern versions follow manuscripts that read "them … they will reign." Either way, the redeemed reign with Christ.

Angels and all creation (vv11–14)

The circle widens: living creatures and elders, then countless angels, then every creature everywhere. Angels sing of redemption they watch but do not need (1 Pet 1:12; Eph 3:10). The same worship is given "to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (v13). Clarke, in Guzik: if Jesus were not God, this would be idolatry. L. Morris adds that the Lamb is reckoned with God and as God. Heaven never worships a creature (19:10; 22:9). Worshiping the Lamb alongside the Father is heaven's testimony that

Jesus is God (John 5:23; Phil 2:9–11). The scene ends where all true worship ends: "Amen," and faces on the ground.

Word study (Greek)

- **book — *biblion* (G975):** a scroll, a written document.
- **seal — *sphragis* (G4973):** a seal stamped in wax, guaranteeing a document stays closed.
- **worthy — *axios* (G514):** deserving, of matching weight — the key word of the chapter.
- **open — *anoigō* (G455):** to open.
- **wept — *klaiō* (G2799):** to weep aloud, to sob.
- **Lion — *leōn* (G3023):** a lion; the royal emblem of Judah.
- **root — *rhiza* (G4491):** a root or shoot — both David's source and his descendant.
- **overcome — *nikaō* (G3528):** to conquer, win the victory.
- **Lamb — *arnion* (G721):** a little lamb; John uses it for Christ throughout Revelation.
- **slain — *sphazō* (G4969):** to slaughter, as a sacrifice; the perfect tense in v6 points to a past death with lasting effect.
- **horn — *keras* (G2768):** a horn — a symbol of power and strength.
- **harp — *kithara* (G2788):** a lyre or harp.
- **bowl — *phialē* (G5357):** a broad, shallow bowl used in temple service.
- **incense — *thymiama* (G2368):** incense, the fragrance offered to God.
- **purchased / redeemed — *agorazō* (G59):** to buy in the marketplace; to buy out of bondage.
- **new — *kainos* (G2537):** new in kind, fresh — not merely recent.

Cross-references

Gen 22:8; Gen 49:9–10; Exod 12:3–13; Exod 19:6; Ps 141:2; Isa 11:1, 10; Isa 53:7; Jer 32:9–14; Dan 7:10, 13–14; Zech 4:10; John 1:29; John 5:23; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 6:20; Eph 3:10; Phil 2:9–11; 1 Tim 2:5; 1 Pet 1:12, 18–19; 1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:6; Rev 4:11; Rev 8:3–4; Rev 22:16.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · REVELATION 5:8 (KJV)

8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

Command to obey — "Stop weeping; behold."

The elder doesn't tell John his tears are wrong. He tells him where to look (v5). When I am crying over a world — or a life — that seems stuck, the command is to look at the Lamb. For a man who has lost

hope, sitting in a cell or in the wreckage of his addiction, the word is the same: stop weeping and behold. Someone has overcome.

Sin to confess — trying to be worthy

No one in heaven or on earth was found worthy (v3), and I still try to earn my place — enough good days, enough service, enough clean time. I confess that my worth before God doesn't come from my record. It comes from the Lamb's blood.

Warning to heed — no one else can open the book

Not a politician, not a program, not a philosophy. Every human solution was searched and failed (v3). If I put my hope for the future anywhere but in the Lamb, I will end up weeping with nothing to show for it.

Promise to trust — purchased with His blood

"You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (v9). That includes the men no one else wanted — the felon, the addict, the man who ruined everything. The price is already paid. And my prayers aren't lost; they are kept in golden bowls before the throne (v8).

Example to follow — the Lion who became a Lamb

Jesus conquered by laying down His life. Real strength for a man is not swagger; it's sacrifice. I want to lead the men around me the way the Lamb leads — by giving myself for them.

Worship

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (v12). I add my voice to the elders, the angels and every created thing — and fall down and say "Amen."

Prayer

Lamb of God, You alone are worthy. When I weep over what I can't fix, turn my eyes to You. Stop me from trying to earn what You bought with Your blood. Thank You that my prayers are kept before Your throne. Let the men I serve hear that You purchased people from every tribe and tongue and nation — and from every prison and every gutter too. Worthy is the Lamb. Amen.