

## Revelation Chapter 5- John Karmelich

1. My title for Chapter 5 is: "The Close of Escrow".
  - a) For those of you not familiar with this term, it is used in the Western United States and most Spanish speaking countries in real estate transactions.
  - b) Let's say a house is to be sold. The buyer and seller agree upon a price. The buyer has to do a number of things first, including getting a loan. The seller has to do a number of things first, like move out, and maybe let the buyer get some professional inspectors in the property to make sure it is ok.
  - c) A neutral 3rd party is set up to make sure all the terms of the real estate contract are enforced prior to the sale taking place. This person is called the escrow officer. That officer verifies all the terms of the contract are completed or the sale doesn't happen. The time frame when all of this occurs is called "escrow". A buyer and seller may agree to the sales price one day. It is usually about thirty days later when the "close of escrow" comes.
  - d) Now that our real estate education seminar is finished, welcome to a study of Revelation Chapter 5! ☺ I compare this chapter to an escrow, because we have the greatest "contract" in human history closing in an escrow-like ceremony, only with a lot more fanfare. ☺
2. Let me summarize the chapter and then I'll come back to this theme:
  - a) When we last studied chapter 4, John the writer of Revelation was somehow transported into God's throne room. Chapter 4 described what that throne room looked like.
  - b) In Chapter 5, we're still in that throne room. In this chapter, we find out the purpose why John was taken into this throne room: To witness the "close of escrow".
  - c) The comparison to an escrow is that this isn't a house being purchased, but mankind itself. It refers to the official transfer of mankind being purchased by God the Father and those who are saved are transferred to God with the blood of Jesus being the payment.
  - d) The key moment is when Jesus, called both a lamb and a lion in this chapter, takes this scroll. He is declared the only person worthy enough to take this scroll.
  - e) The chapter then describes different "entities" (e.g., angels, people, etc.) worshipping God after Jesus takes this scroll. The chapter describes this ceremony of Jesus taking a scroll from God the Father.
3. Getting back to the concept of "escrow", it is essential to understand the "terms of the contract".
  - a) As I stated in the last lesson, the only key assumptions we must make about God is that He exists, and He is perfect. Children often ask, "Who made God?" If someone made God, there must be a superior god. You keep playing that game until you ultimately come to a god that wasn't created. The point is we assume there is a single entity we call "God" that always was, and was never created.
  - b) We also assume this God is perfect. If God were not perfect, He cannot be trusted. A perfect God knows all things. That means He knows the past, present and future. If God created all things, He must exist outside the world of "things", including time. If God is perfect, He cannot lie. If God were capable of lying, we cannot trust Him.
    - i) In the last chapter, John saw a rainbow around the throne. It is symbolic of the rainbow given after Noah's flood. It was a promise made by God He would never flood the world again. I believe that rainbow is around God's throne as a symbolic sign to us that God is incapable of breaking His unconditional promises to us.
  - c) The question man would then have of God is, "Well, if we assume You exist, what do You want from us? Why did You create us? Why is life unfair? Do we get to live forever? How do we get into heaven, or in other words, how do we please You?"
    - i) First, let's review why God created us in the first place: As an expression of His love. If God is a god of love, He desires to express that love upon someone or something. He chose humans.

- ii) The reason God then gave us free will is to see if we would love Him back. If we love Him by force or coercion, it is not true love.
- iii) The reason we live forever is the only way life can be fair. People are imperfect and people sin. The only way God can show He's fair to all is for us to live in the next life as well as this one. That way, God can judge people fairly based on their behavior in this life. Those that die innocently get rewarded in the next life.
- iv) So if God loves people, why would He send some to hell? In a sense, hell is a place where people choose to go. It is a place for those who willfully choose to reject God. We as Christians call it hell because it is eternal separation from God. Sending people to hell is giving them what they want: It is a place for those who do not want to live under God's laws and God's rules.
- v) If God exists, what does He expect of us? That's what the bible lays out. An old Christian joke says there are two ways to get into heaven: One is to never sin even once in your life and tell Jesus to move over. The other is to accept His payment for your sins. God also judges people based on what knowledge they have of Him. Even people who never heard of God instinctively know stealing and murdering is wrong. Nature itself lays out the idea that a superior being exists.
- vi) If God is perfect, He will judge people perfectly. I don't lose sleep over that issue. My job is to focus on what God called me to do. The rest is His problem.
- vii) Grant, it, I'm oversimplifying many complicated issues. The reason I'm bringing up these age old questions is to understand the purpose of Chapter 5: God made a "contract deal" with mankind. God says to humanity in effect, "This is what I expect of you. If you follow my rules, you as humans get to spend eternity with Me in heaven. If you don't, then it's off to hell you go." Just as human life has a beginning; human life must have an ending. There must be a "close of escrow" to human life as we know it. The ceremony for that procedure is Chapter 5.

4. With all of this fresh in mind, let's talk about the key object of Chapter 5: "The Scroll".

- a) The focus of Chapter 5 is a scroll. It is sealed with seven seals.
- b) In Chapter 5, an angel asks the question, "Who is worthy to open the scroll?"
- c) The drama of the chapter is the "revealing of Jesus" himself. He is the only one worthy of opening the scroll. The remainder of the chapter is about "the audience" giving praise to God the Father and for Jesus being worthy enough to open the scroll.
- d) When the scroll is actually opened in Chapter 6, this begins the judgment of the earth. That goes on for many chapters. When I get to chapter 6 in the next lesson, I'll talk about why God choose this methodology for the earth's punishment.
- e) Here's the interesting thing about the scroll itself: The bible never says what is written on the scroll! The focus of the chapter is that Jesus is the only one worthy to open up the scroll, which is sealed. When the scroll is actually opened, the earth's judgment begins.
- f) This is why I call the chapter "The close of escrow". It is about God's contractual relationship with mankind. That scroll somehow represents the terms of that contract. Human history has shown man is unworthy of being with God, based on our own efforts.
  - i) It would be like "God the escrow officer" saying, "Humanity has failed to live up to the terms of this contract. At the same time my son Jesus has fulfilled the terms. Therefore, I can close this escrow."

5. Let me try to explain "God's game plan" another way:

- a) When Adam and Eve made the decision to willfully disobey God, the rules changed. It is God saying to them, "OK, you want to live without being fully dependant upon Me? Give it your best shot!" ☺
- b) Mankind, on its own, eventually became so corrupt, God flooded the world. Suppose mankind could say to God: "It's not our fault Adam and Eve sinned. Why don't we start over with one "really good" family and see if we could survive?" Thus, the flood.

- c) Suppose mankind could say to God, "Well, since that that didn't work, how about if you, God send us a specific set of people to show us by example how we as humans are supposed to please You?" Thus, God established the Israelite nation. God then wrote out the first five books of the bible, which lay out God's rules for proper behavior.
    - i) Even then, God's Chosen People failed to fully live up to those rules after they agreed to live by those rules. They had periods of war, periods of peace, periods where they conquered all their enemies (King David) and periods where they had long peace (e.g., King Solomon). Even during all those periods, Israel's history is a recorded history of failure to corporately obey God.
  - d) God said in effect, "In order to show how much I love You, I am going to send "A part of Myself" to pay the price for humanity's sins. For mankind to live with a perfect God, they need to be perfectly forgiven. At the same time, I as God won't violate free will. Therefore, salvation requires the freewill acceptance of Jesus paying the price for one's sins. The greatest expression of God's love is for He-Himself to pay the price for our sins.
  - e) Since God created humans, we must accept there was a beginning of humanity. If there is a beginning, there must be an ending. If God is perfect, then a perfectly loving God cannot continue to let mankind live in a sinful world forever. Sometimes it is more merciful and loving to kill a horse than to let it live in horrible pain the rest of its life. In the same sort of way, a loving God cannot let man live in a sinful world for eternity. Sooner or later, God needs to "close escrow". Chapter 5 is God in effect, looking over mankind and saying, "OK, that's enough. You people have done enough damage to this place. It's time to wrap it up".
  - f) So when does this happen? Don't know. Only God the Father knows the dates. (Ref. Matthew 24:36, et. al.) Be glad it wasn't say, before you and I were saved. God delays it as long as possible is so that as many people as possible choose to accept God and live with Him forever. Still, there has to come a day when life as we know it comes to an end. If there was a beginning of God's redemptive plan, there has to be an end.
    - i) A good biblical summary of what I stated on this page is in 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter, Chapter 3.
  - g) With all of this philosophical stuff in mind, ☺ it's time to actually take on the verses.
6. Chapter 5, Verse 1: Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals.
- a) Chapter 5 takes place in the same location as Chapter 4: God's throne room.
    - i) Chapter 4 described the room itself.
    - ii) Chapter 5 describes the key event that takes place in this room.
    - iii) In other words, John was not taken into God's throne room just to get a guided tour. He was taken to witness a key event in human history. This event will unfold through Chapter 5. Remember the title of this book is the Revelation (i.e., the "revealing") of Jesus Christ. In this Chapter, Jesus Himself is revealed in His role in this throne room.
  - b) Remember Chapter 5 described God the Father as light as reflected from precious jewels.
    - i) There is no physical description of God the Father, other than the "white light" and red colored reflected light. (Reference: Revelation 4:3). This light was not blinding as John could still see other things in the throne room.
    - ii) Whatever God looked like to John, "God" could sit in a kingly throne. (Does that mean God has a behind? ☺ Sorry.) Somehow, God was able to "sit" in a throne. John does not give us any further physical description. The point of the text given is that there is a God, He is in charge, and somehow, He could hold this scroll. The text says God the Father has a "right hand". We know this because in His right hand was the scroll, which is the key object of this chapter.
    - iii) My view is that God is not a human-looking being. For this vision, God the Father manifested Himself for a certain "look" in order to have these word-pictures.

- c) Onto the scroll itself: Let's start with the most important aspect: We don't know what is written on the scroll. The text doesn't say. All we know is that when the seals of the scroll are removed in Chapter 6, this begins the "earth destruction" project.
  - i) The only other thing we learn about this scroll later in the chapter is nobody but Jesus is able to loosen the seals of this scroll.
  - ii) In those days, reading materials were compiled onto scrolls. One would put pages horizontally on a scroll, and the scroll was turned in order to go to the next page.
  - iii) It would probably help to understand scrolls from John's perspective. The text mentions text on both sides of the scroll. Documents would have the title of the scroll on the outside and the text on the inside.
  - iv) Jewish "wills" would often be a document with seven seals. A Jewish man would make out his will, and have seven witnesses. Each of the seven witnesses would then place a wax seal to close up the scroll. Each seal would bear the mark of that witness. That way, when the scroll would actually be opened, the living witnesses could bear that information as true and not a forgery.
- d) So what is this scroll? Remember we don't know for sure. We can only speculate.
  - i) Some argue it is the title deed to the earth. Since sin entered the world, there is a concept that Satan is in control of this world. When Satan tempted Jesus, one of three temptations was to offer Jesus, "this world". Satan was saying in effect the world was His, and was offering back to Jesus if He would bow down and worship Satan. (See Matthew 4:8-9; Luke 4:5-7). My point here is that this would not be a true temptation unless Satan "owned" the world in the first place.
    - a) With that said, some see the "close of escrow" ceremony as the world, and all it contained, including humanity, being given back to its rightful owner, which is Jesus, for agreeing to pay the price on the cross.
    - b) There are some problems with this argument: The scroll had writing on the inside and outside. If it is just the title deed to the earth, why is all the writing necessary? Further, most of the Revelation text coming up describe the world being judged and almost destroyed. If Jesus is taking title to the earth, He doesn't care much for the product. ☺
- e) A clue to the true meaning of the scroll is coming up in Verse 4. It says that John "wept much" that no person was found worthy to open the scroll.
  - i) John was one of Jesus 12 apostles. John understood that Jesus came to pay the price for sins. John understood that Jesus was God. Yet, whatever this scroll was, it made John cry that no one was worthy to open it but Jesus.
  - ii) This leads me (my opinion) to believe the scroll represents God's contractual relationship with mankind, and particular the Jewish people.
  - iii) This is why I call the chapter, "The close of escrow". An escrow requires a contract. The terms of that contract must be fulfilled in order to close escrow. It is as if God the Father is the escrow officer reading this contract and saying, "Only My son fulfilled the terms of this contract".
  - iv) As I stated and implied in the introduction, God set up a contractual relationship with mankind. God said to those with very limited knowledge of God, "I will judge you based on what you do know about me. If you lived on a desert island, I gave you the instinct to know that stealing and murdering is wrong. Plus, all of nature implies that somebody created this stuff. I will judge you accordingly."
  - v) To the Jewish people, God laid out a detailed contractual relationship saying in effect, "In order to please Me, follow these rules". In other words, to those given a lot of knowledge about God, He holds those people to a higher standard.

- vi) My view of the contract is that it holds the laws of the Old Testament and God asks in effect, "Who has lived their whole life and never disobeyed these commandments?" That is terms of the contract.
  - vii) My view is that the reason John didn't specify what's on the scroll is because it is different for every person. God judges us based on what we know about Him. He holds each of us to different standards based on our knowledge of God. As Jesus put it, "To much is given, much is required" (Luke 12:48, paraphrased).
7. Verse 2: And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?"
- a) The focus of the scene now switches in Verse 2:
    - i) In Verse 1, the focus was on this scroll, which was in God's right hand.
    - ii) In Verse 2, an angel "appears out of nowhere" to make an announcement. The announcement was to ask "Who is worthy to break the seals?"
  - b) I have to admit, I was fascinated by the term "mighty" angel. The King James Version says a "strong" angel.
    - i) How did John know this was a mighty or strong angel? Did this angel have more muscles than other angels? ☺ Did John think, "You know, I've seen a lot of angels in my day, and this one is really buff." (Sorry ☺.) What I suspect is the fact that in these visions, John got to see a lot of angels, and somehow, this one was bigger or "mightier" than the others.
    - ii) I suspect the reason this angel is "mighty" is because of the angels' loud voice as stated in Verse 2. Think of a medieval "town crier" making a "Here ye, Here ye" type of announcement. That is what is happening here.
  - c) Back to the angel's announcement: Why was this announcement made? Since God knows all things, He didn't make this announcement for His own sake.
    - i) Therefore, the announcement is either for man's sake or for the angel's sake or both. John got to see the scroll and hear the announcement. John was the one crying in Verse 4 that no one was worthy to open the scroll.
8. Verse 3: But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it.
- a) After the angel made this announcement, Verse 3 now declares the answer to the angel's question. Verse 2 was the angel asking "Who is worth to open the scroll". Verse 3 says "no one" was able to (be worthy) to open it and look inside it (except Jesus, Verse 4).
  - b) How did "everyone" know they were unable to open the scroll? I don't remember anyone asking me this question. ☺ The point is not that every human was asked the question. Remember that God is the judge here. He is the one who determines who is "worthy" to open the scroll. The Book of Romans says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". (Romans 3:23 NIV). This verse is effectively saying the same thing.
  - c) The verse says no one was worthy enough to look inside the scroll.
    - i) Whatever the scroll is, when it is unsealed, it begins the judgment of the world. Since Jesus is the only one "worthy" of opening the scroll, (Coming up in Verse 5) it is because He is the only one "perfect enough" to be given the power to "enforce the contract" that is stated within this scroll document.
9. Verse 4: I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside.
- a) The question of the moment is why did John weep here in this verse? After all, John knew Jesus was God. John knew that Jesus would come back one day and judge the earth. What was John thinking here that made him weep?
    - i) The text says it was because no one else was "worthy" to open the scroll.
    - ii) I believe John understood that this scroll represented salvation. John understood that no person could approach God based on their efforts.

- iii) John grew up Jewish. He knew "good people" with kind hearts who loved God and studied His word and did their utmost to please God based on their efforts. I think John stopped and thought about those "good people" he knew and loved. Despite their best efforts, a perfect God cannot just forgive sin, and still be perfect.
    - iv) A question that popped in my head was, "Do I weep for the lost?" "Do you or I have a heart for the unsaved and "weep" for their salvation?
    - v) Which leads back to this verse: I think it hit John here, that no person could please God through their efforts. I think John wept the most for his Jewish friends and relatives who tried their best to live out the Jewish law.
  - b) Let's step back for a second: OK, John I understand that I need Jesus to go to heaven. Why should I care about this stuff? ☺
    - i) It's important to grasp the idea that there is coming a point in time when God "wraps things up". Life does not go on forever with some people accepting Jesus and some people don't. Whether we like it or not, there are only a "fixed" number of people in heaven. God started this world, and will end it one day.
    - ii) Because we don't know when this day comes, the motivation for us is to live a life of gratitude to God for what He has done for us. It is impossible to please God without His help. One can live a life pleasing to God if we abide (stick close to Him) in His love. Life begins with acknowledging we too, "are not worthy to open this scroll". When we see others sin against us, we have to remember that we too, are not worthy to open that scroll. We are called to a life of obedience not based on our efforts, but by God working through us.
    - iii) Meanwhile, back at the throne. ☺
- 10. Verse 5: Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."
  - a) If you recall from the last chapter, one of the groups around this throne room were these twenty four elders. One of the elders turned to John when he was crying and made an announcement as stated here in Verse 5.
    - i) On a side note, this gives us some clues about the 24 elders: They are able to act individually. Not all 24 elders approached John, just one of the 24.
    - ii) In Chapter 4, the 24 elders had crowns of victory. Chapter 4 also mentioned four other creatures. When these four creatures praised God, the elders joined in. My point here is that praising God is not all the elders do. One of them could stop praising God long enough to go give some comfort to John. It also teaches us that the elders were aware of John's presence in the room.
  - b) Now we get to two specific titles of Jesus. The first is the "Lion of the tribe of Judah".
    - i) If you follow the lineage of Jesus from the first Jew, Abraham, it follows to his son Isaac and to his son Jacob. Jacob had 12 sons. One of the sons was Judah. It is through Judah that the Messianic line continued to King David and onward.
    - ii) If you read the Old Testament, there is no blunt passage that says, "A messiah would come through this guy Judah, and eventually through King David". There are only clues here and there that one gets to understand this prophecy.
    - iii) In Genesis, when Jacob was near his death, he gave a prophecy over each of his 12 sons. Over his son Judah, Jacob gave a "lion" reference. In the next sentence, Jacob says, "The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs". (Genesis 49:10 NIV).
      - a) A scepter is a staff (stick), but it is a symbol of a king's power. The idea of this prophecy is that this scepter, a symbol of kingly power, will stay in Judah's line until "he comes to whom it belongs". This is a messianic reference and it is where the cliché, "The lion of the tribe of Judah" originated.

- iv) Verse 6 also says, "The root of David". King David was a descendant of Judah. To David it was promised that a Messiah (literally, a king) would ruler forever. (Reference: 2nd Samuel 7:16). This prophecy refers to a descendant of Judah and King David who would rule over the world forever. Both Matthew and Luke's Gospel give Jesus' lineage, which includes both David and Judah.
  - c) Now let's get back to the text: One of the 24 elders told John that the only person worthy to open the scrolls was (paraphrasing) "The guy with these two Jewish titles".
    - i) Why didn't this elder bluntly say Jesus? The idea was for John to figure it out himself. The idea was for the "reader familiar with Judaism" to get it as well.
    - ii) The idea is that the Jewish people had more accountability before God than any other group, because they had more knowledge of God than any other group. Given that accountability, they failed to be any person who "deserved" to open the scrolls. In other words, all humans have this incurable "sin disease". Despite man's best efforts to please God, we can't do it by trying.
      - a) So why bother trying to please God in the first place? The answer is gratitude. If we going to heaven based on the blood of Jesus, God expects gratitude. Living a life pleasing to God not only shows gratitude, but also leads to a happier and more fulfilled life. The mistake is always thinking we are good enough to please God based on our own efforts.
      - iii) If this is a "Jewish thing", and a Jewish Messiah is the only one who can open the scrolls, why punish the whole world, which again, starts up in the next chapter? The answer is while the Jewish Nation is the "most accountable", God holds the whole world accountable based on whatever knowledge they have of Him.
  - d) OK, John, I get all of this. What's really going on here? What's the point?
    - i) The key is the word "triumphed". It is the same word translated "overcome" back in the early chapters. The idea is one of victory.
    - ii) Again, we don't know what is in the scroll. The fact that no person is worthy of looking at the words except Jesus tells me it is about God's standards for entrance into heaven. Jesus blatantly teaches no one can get into heaven except through Him (John 14:6). Putting that together, this scroll represents God's requirements to get into heaven. Jesus said He came to earth to "fulfill" the law's requirements. That's why I call this chapter the "close of escrow". This is that ceremony.
11. Verse 6: Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. <sup>7</sup> He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.
- a) Until this point in Chapter 5, we have only talked about Jesus. He hasn't yet appeared.
  - b) What is important to grasp here, and throughout Revelation is the fact this book works in word-pictures. For example, God the Father choose to reveal Himself as light to John to represent His glory and His perfection in Chapter 4.
  - c) Jesus here is manifested as a lamb that had been slain. This same lamb is also walking. The idea is the lamb had been "resurrected".
    - i) Now think about the Exodus from Egypt. God told the Israelites that He would kill every first born son in Egypt including the Jewish boys. The only way to save the firstborn sons of the Israelites was to kill a lamb and put its blood on the doorposts. This is a word-picture that "everyone" must suffer for our sins, but are saved by the blood of the lamb!
    - ii) Just as a sacrificial lamb was spared for their sins, so another sacrificial lamb is at God's throne. When John the Baptist first publicly introduces Jesus, the title John the Baptist uses is "The Lamb of God". (Ref.: John 1:29, 1:36).

- iii) Why doesn't Revelation just bluntly say, "This is Jesus next to God the Father?"
      - a) The idea is God wants the "Jewish reader" to put it all together. God wants the Jewish reader to understand that the same promises made about this coming messiah-king to rule over the world must also be the sacrificial lamb for everyone's sin.
      - b) There is a view among some (not all) Orthodox Jews that there is really two Messiah's. They read the passages of a "suffering messiah" (E.g., Isaiah 53, and Psalm 22), plus the references to a "ruling messiah" like we discussed in Verse 5. They can't accept that one messiah fulfills both roles. There is no blunt Old Testament passage that says the messiah comes either once or twice". One has to "figure out" that Jesus fulfills both roles.
  - d) Next, notice where the "lamb" is standing: In the middle of the throne.
    - i) That would be the center spot: That would be where God the Father is located.
    - ii) As I've stated in earlier lessons, the word "Trinity" is not in the bible. To quote Christian apologist Greg Koukl, "The Trinity is a solution, not a problem". The early church needed a term to describe the fact that all three are One, but all three are separate. Thus, they came up with the word "Trinity". Just because a word is not in the bible, does not mean the concept is not in the bible.
    - iii) We have God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, all three "in the center of this throne" mentioned:
      - a) The lamb is obviously Jesus. I don't know any other "Lamb of God" that as John put it, "was slain", and at the same time lives.
      - b) This lamb had "seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God" (Verse 6). This is a reference to the Holy Spirit. I'll come back to this.
      - c) God the Father is mentioned as the lamb took the scroll out of "Him who sat on the throne" (Verse 7). My point is all three are mentioned here.
    - iv) Notice only God the Father "sat on the throne". Yet "God the Son" and "God the Holy Spirit" are in the middle of the throne. That's a pretty important location! ☺
      - a) Remember from the last chapter that the 24 elders and the "four living creatures" spent most of their time worshipping the occupant of the center of the throne. Here's Jesus and the Holy Spirit at the same location!
  - e) Let's get back to this visual picture of Jesus: This lamb who was slain was "standing".
    - i) Dead lambs don't stand up very well. ☺ The idea is this lamb is still living. The idea is a word picture of the resurrection.
    - ii) There are those who theorize that when we see Jesus in heaven, He will still have the scar marks of those who beat Him and killed Him. If you study the passages in the New Testament after the resurrection, notice the disciples and His friends never recognized Jesus until He either said something or some miracle happened.
    - iii) Given that theory, I don't believe when we see Jesus, He will look like a slain lamb when we see Him. At this moment in time, Jesus was manifested (i.e., looked like) a slain-but-living lamb to John in order to accomplish this word picture.
    - iv) Did John literally see a slain, living lamb with seven eyes and horns? Yes. Will we see Jesus like that one day? Probably not, but we don't know. I believe it's a word picture chosen by God at this moment of time for our sake.
  - f) OK, John, what's the deal with the seven eyes and seven horns. Sounds pretty creepy. ☺
    - i) First of all, the text in Verse 7 says that this represents the Spirit of God. Even though it may be what Jesus looked like at that moment in time, John the writer somehow understood those symbols represented the Holy Spirit.
    - ii) The number seven in the bible is associated with "perfection" from God's point of view. God rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day from all creation and the number seven is associated with perfection.



- iii) The word picture of "seven eyes" means God perfectly "sees all". Since this is tied to the Holy Spirit, it is the idea that God the Holy Spirit sees all.
  - iv) Horns refer to animal horns. They didn't have car horns back then. ☺ For an animal with horns or antlers, it was their source of power. The word-picture of seven horns represents "complete power". Remember that the picture of seven eyes and seven horns represents the Holy Spirit, as stated in the text. The idea is that the Holy Spirit is complete in "seeing all" (i.e., seven eyes) and complete in His power (i.e., seven horns).
  - v) On a quick side note, why do Christians consider the Holy Spirit "God"? The only bible passage we have that implies this is when Jesus said, "God is Spirit" (John 4:24). There are lots of passages that describe the Holy Spirit as being sent from God the Father. (E.g., Matthew 3:16). The Holy Spirit is not an entity we normally worship. A function of the Holy Spirit is to lead us in prayer and help us discern God's will for our lives. At the same time, the Spirit is at the center of the throne where this worship of God is taking place. The clues we have through the Holy Spirit is that He is a separate entity from God, but still God, and part of the trinity.
  - g) OK, I've now spent two pages on these verses as there are a lot of word-pictures to describe here. Let us remember what is important here: It is Jesus himself, portrayed as a slain lamb who is the only one "worthy to take this sealed scroll from God the Father.
12. Verse 8: And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.
- a) The focus of Verses 6 and 7 were on the center of the throne where the scroll was past from God the Father to God the Son.
  - b) The focus of Verse 8 is just outside the center of the throne. In the last chapter, we spent a lot of time talking about "the four living creatures" and the "twenty four elders".
    - i) To give a quick review, these "four creatures" are some sort of powerful angelic beings. In the Old Testament, they are called cherub (singular) or cherubim (plural). There are four of these creatures guarding God's throne. They also participate in the worship of God.
    - ii) The "24 elders" is a classical debate in Christianity. The majority view is they represent redeemed (saved) humanity. It represents all who died who are saved up to this point in time and Christians who are "raptured" (taken up alive) to heaven as the "Christian time era" has come to a close.
      - a) The alternative view is they represent angelic beings. These angels are victorious in that they have overcome demonic forces in the great behind-the-scenes spiritual battles and this is the victory party now that Jesus is formally accepting this scroll.
      - b) We'll discuss the 24 elders some more later in this lesson.
  - c) Back to the verses: After Jesus took the scroll in the previous verse, it causes these four creatures and the 24 elders to stop and worship "The Lamb".
    - i) Again, the "Lamb" represents Jesus, as in "The Lamb of God".
  - d) This exact moment is "The close of escrow".
    - i) Jesus once said about Satan: "Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." (John 12:31-32, NIV)
    - ii) Jesus called Satan, "The prince of this world". Paul called Satan, "The ruler of the kingdom of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). The point is somehow, someway, Satan is "in charge" or has dominion over the non-saved.
    - iii) When Adam and Eve sinned, the concept of "sin" entered humanity like a genetic defect that is past on from generation to generation.

- iv) When Adam and Eve sinned, the world was "quitclaimed" (to use another real estate term) from God to Satan. A quitclaim is used in real estate when one turns over any interest they have in a property to another. Since Adam and Eve choose to disobey God, God in turn, gave them what they wanted, which is the freedom to turn from God at any given moment.
- v) God "quitclaimed" the world (i.e., all people) to their own free will so they could either choose God's will or their own will in their life. Salvation is about willfully choosing to dedicate one's life back to God. To do that, the full price of our sins has to be paid first. Thus we have the "close of escrow" when the world (i.e., the salvation of believers) is in play here.
- e) Back to the verse: What do we do once we proclaim Jesus as our Savior? We show gratitude for that fact. We bow down and worship. We thank God the Father that a provision was made so we can spend eternity with Him. We don't have to worry about the price of sin because it has been paid. The escrow is closed. ☺
  - i) This is why I emphasize the fact that God exists outside of time. This singular event may have occurred about 2,000 years ago, but that event still continues today. As long as people are still willing to turn to Jesus, "the close of escrow" for the payment of one's sins is a continual event. This verse is a pivotal point of the chapter and the pivotal point of all of history.
- f) Let's finish Verse 8. The 24 elders in this verse were "holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."
  - i) In the Old Testament tabernacle, there was an altar of incense. Incense lets off a nice smell as the smoke rises. It is a picture of prayer as the "sweet smell" of the smoke is rising to heaven.
  - ii) Here in Verse 8, we have "golden bowls full of incense". The text specifically says the incense represents the prayers of the saints, which are redeemed people.
  - iii) So what are those prayers? The text does not say. The rest of the chapter focuses on everybody praising God. Given that those could be the prayers of people asking Jesus to forgive them of their sins. The prayers could be for this "moment in time" when Jesus starts the process of His Second Coming.
  - iv) Part of the Lord's Prayer is "Thy kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10). That is a prayer for Jesus Second Coming to begin. Some argue that these prayers are to begin the Second Coming and world judgment to begin. That would fit with the events beginning in Chapter 6.
- 13. Verse 9: And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.
  - a) Let's start with the second word in Verse 9: "They". Who are "they"?
    - i) Using the rules of English grammar (which I occasionally violate ☺), the "they" would refer to the last pronoun in the previous sentence. That would be the 24 elders. One could correctly argue it refers to both the "creatures" and the elders.
  - b) In case anyone doesn't get the fact that this slain lamb is Jesus Christ, this point becomes more obvious here in Verse 9. This verse gives the Gospel message: That with the blood of Jesus, people were saved from all over the world, not just those who were Jewish.
  - c) The application for us of course is to worship God in the same way. The idea of worship begins with gratitude. God desires we show gratitude for our salvation. That gratitude becomes our motivation for serving Him here on earth.
  - d) I get the impression that when we get to heaven, we're going to spend a lot of time singing praises to God. If you don't enjoy doing that now, you won't enjoy it in heaven. Better start practicing now and get accustomed to it! ☺

- e) I have to admit, there are times when things are not going well when I don't feel like praising God. It is in such times that we must praise God. Getting through tough times begins with having the proper, eternal perspective. Stopping to say how grateful one is to God usually won't make the problem go away, but it does help our prospective. Praising God begins with the decision to praise Him, and then one lets the emotions follow.
14. Verse 10: You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."
- a) Now comes the salvation "bonus prize". ☺ Not only does God save us for accepting Jesus payment for our sins, but believers are made a "kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on earth".
  - b) Interpreting this verse depends upon one's view of end times events. Let me start by giving the most common view amongst evangelical Christian scholars:
    - i) This view is that there is a future day where Jesus will literally reign from earth. There is a 1,000 year period where Jesus is king over the world. We'll get to this in Chapter 20. This is called the "pre-millennial" view, as we are living in a time era before Jesus begins this 1,000 year time era.
      - a) Verse 10 says them (that's us!) are a "kingdom and priests". The pre-millennial view is that Christians will rule alongside Jesus during this time era. We still intercede for people as priests. Who do we rule "over"? Some people do survive through the judgment chapters of Revelation 6-19.
      - b) In the Gospels, Jesus referred to all Christians as "a kingdom of God". The idea is that no matter what country one lives in, a Christian is also part of a separate kingdom in which Jesus is king. The point is even though Jesus is ruling, we are part of that ruling kingdom.
      - c) In the Old Testament a priest is the one who intercedes on man's behalf to God. Since the Cross, all Christians have that special right. We can each approach God, through the shed blood of Jesus to pray for others as well as ourselves. We become priests of God.
    - ii) By the way, this is the Messianic view most commonly held by religious Jews. Their view of the messiah is one who rules the world from Jerusalem.
  - c) The other major view is the "amillennialists" view. This view is the most common among Catholic and Orthodox scholars. They don't take the 1,000-year millennium literally. It is another Revelation word picture. The view is that we are part of Jesus kingdom in this lifetime and "priests" now, in this lifetime.
    - i) A priest is one who intercedes from man to God. We as Christians have the right to be "priests" as we can approach God through the blood of Jesus. That is why the amillennial view believes that we are priests now, and part of God's kingdom.
    - ii) Those who believe in a literal 1,000-year period point out the future-tense of this sentence. Verse 10 says Christians "will" reign on earth. The counter-argument among the amillennialists is the "will" begins at the time of the cross.
  - d) Speaking of debates, I should go back the "24 elders" debate one more time.
    - i) If you read the King James Version(KJV) of Verses 9-10, the 24 elders sing about the fact that "we" are being redeemed.
    - ii) If you read the New International Version (NIV) version (used here), the 24 elders say "they" are being redeemed. So which is right?
    - iii) The King James Version relies upon an medieval bible manuscripts that originated on the European continent. The NIV Version is based on a collection of Greek manuscripts found in Egypt. The differences between these manuscripts are minimal and agree about 98% of the time. The differences don't affect any key Christian doctrinal issues. However, one place they differ is the use of "we" versus "them", only in this passage.

- a) When you read a study bible, you will often see footnotes that give alternate bible readings. Those footnotes are usually based on the differences between these manuscripts.
  - iv) If the word "we" is correct, it would be a proof that the 24 elders are definitely "the church", since "we" would be the 24 elders, and they are now singing in heaven. If "we" is correct, the 24 elders are singing they were redeemed by the blood of Jesus and therefore, the 24 elders represent redeemed Christians. If the correct word is "we", then Christians are in heaven prior to the judgment of the earth that begins in the next chapter. This argues for a "pre-tribulation" rapture.
  - v) If the word "they" or "them" is correct, the 24 elders could be either angelic creatures or the church. Those that argue the rapture doesn't happen until after the judgment of the world (as described in Revelation coming up) argues that these 24 elders are angelic beings. That argument is the 24 elders are saying "them" and not "we".
  - vi) I personally prefer the "we" argument, but again, the debate has been going on for centuries and I'm not going to solve it here. ☺
- 15. Verse 11: Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. <sup>12</sup> In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"
  - a) Remember the focus of John's vision is going from the throne "outward":
    - i) First John described God and the lamb in Verse 6 and 7.
    - ii) Then John described the four creatures and 24 elders in Verses 8-10.
    - iii) Now in Verse 11, were going further "outward" to describe lots of angels.
  - b) In Verse 11, John said the number of angels were "thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand". The idea is they were too innumerable to count. It gives you a visual idea of how many angels exist in the world. The basic idea is that there may be a specific number of angels, but that population is too big to count!
  - c) The focus of Verses 6 and 7 were on the center of the throne where the scroll was past from God the Father to God the Son. The focus of Verse 8 is just outside the center of the throne. If you recall from the last chapter, we spent a lot of time talking about "the four living creatures" and the "twenty four elders".
  - d) Getting back to the "who are the 24 elders" debate, if the 24 elders are angelic beings, why doesn't John just call them angels? After all, John used the word angels in Verse 11 to describe angels. Don't know the answer, but many use this argument to support the idea that the 24 elders represent the church and angels represent, well, angels. ☺
  - e) One more bit of bible scholar stuff: I don't like the word "sang" in Verse 12. If you look up the Greek word translated "sang" here, it is better translated "spoke" as opposed to "sang". Many bible scholars argue that angels never sing, and that privilege is reserved for only for Christian believers. If you study the bible text carefully, in the original Greek, you don't find verses where angels sing, only speak. That includes this verse.
  - f) The main point of the verse is that the angels join in and praise God for the "close of escrow" event of this chapter. In all of my debate discussions and word picture discussions, let us not lose focus of what is the major issue going on in this chapter: Jesus is paying the price for sins and all the creatures in heaven are praising this event.
    - i) I'm guilty here of violating one of my own bible rules: "The plain things are the main things and the main things are the plain things!"
- 16. Verse 13: Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"
  - a) John continues his focus "outward" on who is praising God.

- b) Now the focus is 1) in heaven; 2) on earth and 3) under the earth. Verse 13 says that every creature is praising God.
  - c) OK, John, I'm confused. When did, or when will every creature on earth do this? Will frogs "ribbit" praises to God? ☺ What about bugs? What about those who are atheists?
    - i) Paul explains this in Romans: "For we know that even the things of nature, like animals and plants, suffer in sickness and death as they await this great event. And even we Christians, although we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, also groan to be released from pain and suffering. We, too, wait anxiously for that day when God will give us our full rights as his children, including the new bodies he has promised us – bodies that will never be sick again and will never die." (Romans 8:22-23, The Living Bible)
    - ii) What John saw in this part of the vision was not every insect singing hymns. ☺ The idea of all of creation wanting to "end" of this disease called sin. The animal kingdom will benefit from the end of sin as well. The bible predicts a future time of peace where there are no more predatory animals! (See Isaiah 11:6, 65:25).
  - d) There are also bible references to the fact that every knee will bow to Jesus one day. (Ref.: Isaiah 45:23, Romans 14:11 and Philippians 2:10). The idea is that one either does it by free choice or by force. Getting back to this verse, John heard "everyone" praising God for the events of this chapter. That is why I hold the view that heaven is a "timeless" place. John heard all of creation either by free will or by force praising Jesus as Lord.
17. Verse 14: The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.
- a) Meanwhile, back near the center of this throne, the four creatures and the elders are "leading" this worship service.
  - b) Remember the word "Amen" literally means "And so be it". One is in agreement with what is being said. It is as if you hear someone else make a statement and you say, "I completely agree with that statement". That is another way of saying, "Amen".
  - c) Here is the whole world honoring Jesus as Lord. That includes non human creatures waiting for the day when sin will come to an end. That includes those who do not believe in Jesus being forced to worship Him. All of creation is honoring Jesus for paying the price of sin. Here are the "worship leaders", these four creatures and the 24 elders, now saying "Amen" to the angels and all of creation honoring God.
18. OK, now that Jesus takes "possession" of the world in Chapter 5, or more specifically possession of the redeemed, what happens next? In Chapter 6, the seals of the scrolls are loosed and we read about destruction of the world. What's the story?
- a) To put it another way, now that Jesus takes possession of the world, He begins an extensive remodeling project. ☺ When we remodel a house, we tear down what is old and unusable and replace it with what is good. Yes, it is about judgment, but the judgment is on the "unusable". We'll discuss that more in the next lesson. In Chapter 5, Jesus closes escrow. In Chapter 6, Jesus "works" on what is now His possession.
  - b) There is another application here: When Jesus "takes over" our lives, He too, begins to remodel us and shape us more to His liking. At the same time, He removes the sinful aspects of our lives and judges sin. One can read Revelation in that spiritual context. I believe there is a more literal interpretation, but one can see it that way as well.
  - c) In the meantime, most of the text of this chapter is about praising God. The bible is trying to give us an elephant-sized clue as to what we are to do with our salvation: Give gratitude to God for Jesus "taking title" to our lives, to humanity and to creation itself. The escrow is closed, its time to celebrate.
19. Let's pray: Father, thank You for our salvation. Thank You for this single event in history so that we can spend eternity expressing our gratitude. While we wait for the day of our redemption, we can have peace knowing that day has already come! Help us to have the proper perspective to rely upon Your power to be a witness to those around us. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.