

The Book No One Can Open Except?

An explanation of
Revelation chapter 5

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Table of contents

Introduction	3
The significance of the scroll	3
Who opens the scroll?	3
The lion of ... Judah	3
The root of David	4
Why Christ is worthy	4
Christ the Lamb	5
A little lamb	5
A scarred lamb	6
Seven horns	6
Seven eyes	7
Heaven's response to the scroll	8
Worship	8
Heavenly music	8
Incense	8
The contents of the scroll	9
Old Testament parallels	9
Jeremiah's land purchase	10
The Book of Ruth	11
Reclamation at Calvary	12
The universal anthem of praise	12
An incorrect interpretation	13
Do Revelation Chapters 4 and 5 parallel Daniel 7:9-10?	14
Does Revelation 6:10 imply a connection to the investigative judgment?	16
Does the Spirit of Prophecy indicate a connection to the pre-advent judgment?	16
Dangers of leading others astray	18
The true message of Revelation 5	19
Appendix A	20
Bibliography	21

Introduction

Revelation Chapter 5 is a continuation of the vision of Chapter 4. The fourth chapter revealed God the Father upon the throne, amid the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders. He is pictured in the first apartment of the magnificent sanctuary in the kingdom of heaven.

In reviewing the earlier chapters of Revelation, it is clear that the first chapter brings to view Jesus Christ, as Priest, among the seven lamp stands in the first apartment of the great heavenly temple. Chapter 4 presents the Father as Creator, enthroned, in the first apartment of the same sanctuary before the seven lamps of fire. Chapter 5 now presents both the Father and the Son, and demonstrates the worthiness of the Son of God.

The significance of the scroll

And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written on the inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll. 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. Revelation 5:1-9

The scroll which is pictured in the right hand of God is sealed with seven seals and is clearly of primary importance to the entire heavenly host. First of all it is held in the Father's right hand, which denotes that it pertains to both His power and authority. Second, a strong, mighty angel makes a proclamation to the whole universe concerning the scroll. Third, we witness the heartfelt reaction of John, when he concludes that there is no one who had the ability to open the book. Almost incongruously it is said that he *wept much* even while surrounded by the exalted atmosphere of heaven. All of this suggests that there is something very significant about this scroll. Finally, when One is found who is worthy to open the scroll, the response of the heavenly host affirms its importance.

Who opens the scroll?

The lion of ... Judah

The one who was found worthy to open the scroll is described as *the lion of the tribe of Judah*. Judah was the leading tribe of Israel and the lion was its emblem. The royal house of David, which was of the tribe of Judah, consequently had the lion as its standard also. In Jacob's prophecy regarding Judah in Genesis 49:8-12 there are a number of links between Judah and the lion. The lion denotes sovereignty, leadership, courage, strength and kingship. These qualities apply supremely to Jesus Christ in His heavenly state. His kingliness denotes His power to deal with His enemies, His power to end the reign of Satan and destroy all who owe allegiance to the great deceiver. The lion

also speaks of Christ in regard to His justice as the great Kinsman-Redeemer: one of the roles of the kinsman-redeemer was to take vengeance upon any who had wronged those who were their near kin.

The root of David

Christ is also spoken of as *the root of David*, a term drawn from the book of Isaiah.

There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. Isaiah 11:1

Jesse was the father of David. This means that a rod (or shoot) would come out of the stem (or stump, or family) of Jesse. In other words, Christ would be the offspring of David. The prophet Isaiah declared

And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse (or David), who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and his resting place shall be glorious. Isaiah 11:10

This prophecy was also fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He would be *the root of David*, however He would also *precede* David. He was not only the offspring of David, He existed before David was born. In fact He would be the progenitor of David. This proved to be a great enigma for the Jewish mindset. Jesus, during his earthly ministry, used this fact to effectively silence the Pharisees who were continually cavilling and trying to catch Him out with devious questions. Matthew records how Jesus asked the Pharisees

What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is He? They said to Him, "The son of David". He said to them, "How then does David in Spirit (or vision) call him 'Lord', saying, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool"? If David then called him "Lord", how is He his Son? And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare to ask him any more questions. Matthew 22:41-46

The whole scenario presented an unsolvable conundrum to the opponents of Jesus. The fact that He was the *root of David* indicated that He was not only David's progenitor, but that He had existed from eternity. He was God the Son. He was

... in the form of God (but) did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation. Philippians 2:6-7

The two terms, the *lion of Judah* and *the root of David*, therefore, denote Christ's kingship and deity – representing both His fullness of authority as well as the fullness of His power.

Why Christ is worthy

He (Christ) has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals. The word *prevailed* means *conquered*. Christ has gained the victory and this victory has enabled him to take the scroll. What, some may ask, is the victory that Christ has gained?

Christ the Lamb

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. Revelation 5:6

John sees a lamb before the throne. As with many heavenly symbols this did not mean that this is a literal lamb? Rather, it is Jesus Christ who is literally a man, *the man Christ Jesus*. Here He is pictured in His glorified body, forever a man, forever linked with the human race. But why would He be portrayed as a lamb when he is actually a human being? The term *lamb* is a figure of speech, in this instance, which reflects back on the earthly mission of Jesus. When John the Baptist introduced Jesus to the world, he declared

Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. John 1:29

This term implies the meekness, the humility, the submissiveness and condescension of God the Son, who

... made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. Philippians 2:7

A little lamb

It goes without saying that Christ is a special lamb. The original Greek word used on this occasion means *a little lamb*. In the Book of Revelation the word for *lamb* is always *little lamb*. Some Bible versions state it as *a pet lamb*. The only other place in the New Testament where this word for *little lamb* is used is in John 21:15. Here Jesus, in addressing Peter says, *Feed my lambs*. What Jesus is actually saying is *feed my little lambs*.

Why should Jesus, in His exalted, heavenly state, be described this way? This expression, amongst other things, implies endearment, referencing a close, loving relationship. In the first instance it describes the relationship between the Father and the Son. This precious relationship that exists between the Father and the Son is revealed by the Spirit of Prophecy in a beautiful description of the reunion between Jesus and His Father once Jesus returned to Heaven after His resurrection.

All are there to welcome the Redeemer. They are eager to celebrate His triumph and to glorify their King. But He waves them back. Not yet; He cannot now receive the coronet of glory and the royal robe. He enters into the presence of his Father. He points to His wounded head, the pierced side, the marred feet; He lifts His hands, bearing the print of nails.... He approaches the Father... The voice of God is heard proclaiming that justice is satisfied.... The Father's arms encircle His Son, and the word is given, "Let all the angels of God worship Him." ¹

This is a beautiful picture of the intimate nature of the Godhead, of the affection between the Father and the Son. Perhaps the expression *little lamb* also denotes the affection

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1898), 884.

that God and Christ also have for us. It could also refer to the preciousness of Christ to the believer. Jesus can be closer and more precious to us than any earthly person. As the hymn declares, *I am His and He is mine forever*.

A scarred lamb

The Revelator, however, indicates that Jesus Christ is more than just a *little* lamb. Jesus is

... a lamb as though it has been slain. v6

This does not just refer to a lamb that has been killed, for Christ has now risen. It refers to one who demonstrates the marks of death; one in whom are seen the scars of suffering, one who has experienced a deadly wound yet that deadly wound has been healed. Jesus, in His glorified body, is now in heaven.

That glorified body is therefore a scarred body: one which contains the scars of battle. According to general surgical understanding there are five classifications of wounds that humans are capable of sustaining. These are contused wounds, lacerated wounds, penetrating wounds, perforated wounds and incised wounds. All of these five types of wounds were experienced by the Lord Jesus during His sufferings and death.

In fact, there were seven places on His body where he was wounded: where He suffered injury on our behalf. He was wounded in both of His hands, in both of His feet, in His brow, His lacerated back and His pierced side. These seven places of wounding denote the fullness of the agony, the piercing pain, the extremity of His suffering, on behalf of guilty man. But these scars in no wise mar His glorified body! They now are objects of devout fascination, objects of beauty worthy of praise. Notice the prophet's description of Jesus in his heavenly state.

He had rays flashing from His hand and there his power was hidden. Habakkuk 3:4

Undoubtedly from these seven wounds in the glorified body of Jesus, these rays of light beam forth like *horns* (KJV). They declare to the universe the unspeakable sufferings of Christ and the victory that was His. Jesus is in the midst of the throne amid the glory of the kingdom, yet the central attraction is *the lamb slain*. The dominant theme of the heavenly courts is 'Christ crucified'. The prevailing principle is self-sacrifice: self-sacrifice in the person of the scarred Son. This is the principle of God's kingdom. This was payment for the title deeds of the lost inheritance. This was the price of redemption, the cost of victory over the usurper, the ransom price for a lost race.

Seven horns

As a result of His victory, Jesus is described as having *seven horns and seven eyes*. What do these horns and eyes represent? In scripture a horn denotes power. When Jacob foretold the future of the tribe of Joseph he said,

His horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth. Deuteronomy 33:17

Clearly *the seven horns* is a figurative term to describe the power of the Lord Jesus Christ in His heavenly state. *Seven* signifies full, complete and unending power. In other words it signifies the omnipotence of the Lord Jesus Christ. On earth Jesus Christ was not omnipotent, though He was God in the flesh. Whilst on this planet He laid aside this heavenly attributes and lived life on earth as a man. He did not exercise His divine

power: He laid it aside, it was quiescent. But now His omnipotence is reactivated within Him.

Do the seven horns correspond to the seven horns of light that beam from the seven scars of Christ?

There was the hiding of his power. Habakkuk 3:4

The New Testament affirms that the sufferings of Christ are the secret to His power and glory.

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour... Hebrews 2:9

He... became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven and of those on earth, and of those under the earth. Philippians 2:8-10

As Jesus was about to ascend to heaven He declared

All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Matthew 28:18

Seven eyes

Jesus is pictured as not only having seven horns but also *seven eyes*. This is another figure describing Christ in His heavenly state. Eyes denote intelligence and wisdom, consequently the number seven would imply perfect and complete wisdom. In other words this describes the omniscience of Jesus, the all-knowing One.

During His earthly existence Jesus of Himself was not all-knowing: His divine attributes were inactive. However at His resurrection they became reactivated. The *seven eyes* represent the fact that Christ now is all-observant, all-watchful and ever vigilant in regard to His church on earth.

The seven eyes also apply in a spiritual sense on earth. They apply to the Holy Spirit in His ministry – *the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth*. They encompass the ministry of the angels who are

... ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those who will be heirs of salvation. Hebrews 1:14

Angels are the representatives of the Third Person of the Godhead, and are under His direction on earth.

The expression *sent forth into all the earth* is borrowed from the Old Testament and is used to describe the ministry of the angels of God in this world.

(The seven lampstands)... are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth Zechariah 4:10

For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. 2 Chronicles 16:9

These beautiful scriptures state that God's agencies, *the eyes of God*, run throughout the whole earth. Nothing is hid from Christ.

*The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry.
Psalm 34:15*

*The eyes of the Lord thy God are always on it, (the land of Israel representing the realm of the church) from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year.
Deuteronomy 11:12*

*The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven: His eyes behold,
His eyelids test the children of men. Psalm 11:4*

*The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.
Proverbs 15:3*

*His eyes behold the nations, do not let the rebellious exalt themselves. Psalm
66:7*

One day the world's nations will unite against God and His people in an attempt to destroy them. However the Lord Jesus, while forever limited within His flesh as the God-man, is able to behold the activity of the nations by virtue of the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the angels. He is cognizant of every move against His people.

Heaven's response to the scroll

The next section of chapter five describes the response of the assembly to Christ taking the scroll.

Worship

And he came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. Now when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one having a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of saints. v7-8

Described here are the gratitude, devotion and worship on the part of the heavenly host. These beings *fell down before the lamb*. This action reveals the extreme importance of the scroll. It also describes the concern of heaven for the children of men.

Heavenly music

... each one having a harp...

Heaven is place of melody. Everyone present will be gifted with music and this music will be spontaneous as every individual will break forth in melody and song. Each person will express the depths of their emotions in their own individual style, singing their own parts, and together they will compose an orchestra of millions of instruments. There will be no discord, no error, without a single jarring note!

Incense

... golden bowls full of incense...

This will be discussed in the eighth chapter of Revelation. In heaven there is a literal temple, a literal altar, a literal priesthood, and there is literal incense. (See *Literal in Heaven & Spiritual on Earth* under Revelation 4)

The contents of the scroll

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, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth. Revelation 5:9-10

Why is there a new song? It is because the scroll has been taken and opened, indicating that redemption is now guaranteed. This is why some have concluded that this scroll of Revelation 5 is *the book of Redemption*. Dr. Fawcett declares that

*this scroll is the book of Redemption containing the title deeds to man's lost inheritance*²

Dr. J. Seiss in *The Apocalypse* is in agreement.³

One point is very clear: in the eyes of heaven this scroll is of primary importance. If this is a correct assumption then the identification of the contents of the scroll must be possible. The evidence indicates that the scroll contains title deeds. Let us examine this evidence further.

The main theme of Revelation is redemption. When one is finally found to open the scroll the resounding proclamation is made,

... You have redeemed us to God by your blood... v9

The angelic host cries

...Worthy is the lamb who was slain... v12

The Lamb's death was the price of redemption.

Old Testament parallels

The scroll of Revelation is based on what has been described as 'a mosaic of the Old Testament' because it is packed with expressions and phrases from these Hebrew Scriptures. In order to understand the Book of Revelation correctly, therefore, it is essential to examine the book's Old Testament background.

We need to ask if there is any Old Testament book that deals with the question of redemption. Within the Book of Leviticus the laws for the redeeming or buying back of inheritances in the land of Israel are set out. At least five times in six verses the word *redeem* is used.

² Robert Jamieson et al., *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1871), see commentary on Revelation 5:1.

³ J.A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966), 1:267-280.

² Robert Jamieson et al., *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* 6:674.

*The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me. And in all the land of your possession you shall grant **redemption** of the land. If one of your brethren becomes poor, and has sold some of his possession, and if his **redeeming** relative comes to **redeem** it, then may **redeem** what his brother sold. Or if the man has no one to redeem it, but he himself becomes able to **redeem** it, then let him count the years since its sale, and restore the remainder to the man to whom he sold it, that he may return to his possession. But if he is not able to have it restored to himself, then what was sold shall remain in the hand of him who bought it until the Year of Jubilee: and in the Jubilee it shall be released, and he shall return to his possession.*
Leviticus 25:23-28.

Here is the law of inheritances as they pertained to Israel. Under these ancient laws, it was impossible to alienate estates beyond a certain timeframe. If one found it necessary to dispose of their land because of misfortune, it could only be forfeited until the year of Jubilee, that is, to the end of the fifty year period. At that time all property was automatically returned to its original owner or his surviving family. Consequently, if in the meantime the owner had died, then the nearest kin could step in to claim what the original owner had forfeited. In fact the person who was entitled to reclaim the property did not even have to wait for the Jubilee, provided he could establish legal claim to it and was also willing to pay the redemption price.

Jeremiah's land purchase

The prophet Jeremiah was inspired to record an actual land transaction that throws light on this matter when he was commanded by God to buy a parcel of land. The account in Revelation 5 reveals how the scroll in the hand of God can be none other than a scroll containing title deeds, that is, a book of redemption.

The word of the Lord came to me, saying, Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum your uncle will come to you saying, Buy my field which is in Anathoth, for the right of redemption is yours to buy it. Then Hanameel, my uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the Lord, and said to me, Please buy my field that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin; for the right of inheritance is yours, and the redemption is yours; buy it for yourself. Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord.

So I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle's son that was in Anathoth, and weighed out to him the money, which was seventeen shekels of silver. And I signed the deed and sealed it, and took witnesses and weighed the money on the scales. So I took the purchase deed, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open; and I gave the purchase deed to Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, in the presence of Hanameel my uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses who signed the purchase deed, before all the Jews who sat in the court of the prison. Jeremiah 32:6-14

Notice that Jeremiah *sealed the deed*. The margin reads, *I wrote in a book and sealed it*. Thus a record of the land transaction was kept in a book or scroll. According to Weemse,

For the manner of writing the contract, he who was to buy the ground, wrote two instruments or documents. The one to be sealed with his own signet, the other he showed unclosed to the witnesses that they might subscribe and bear witness of

*that which was written. This, the witnesses did subscribe upon the back of the enclosed (or sealed) instrument.*⁴

This clearly shows that the purchaser wrote two documents – one he sealed, the other he left open for the witnesses to read, and then they signed the sealed scroll, rendering it authentic. Thus the scroll was *written within, and on the back side sealed*, with seals or signatures. This parallels the scroll of Revelation five *written within and on the back side, sealed with seven seals*. Without doubt, this scroll concerns title deeds.

But what book of *title deeds* would God be holding in his right hand? Presumably they are the title deeds of some property or inheritance that has been lost and which is of great concern to heaven to redeem.

The Book of Ruth

The details concerning title-deeds and lost inheritances are beautifully brought to view in the ancient story of Ruth in the Old Testament. Ruth is one of the choicest stories in all of literature. Set in the times of the Judges about 1100BC, this account tells of how an Israelite family sold their inheritance because of drought. Through lack of faith the family moved into the land of Moab, the land of the enemy.

Moab became a land of death because the father and the two married sons perished. Ere long the remnant of the family, Naomi and Ruth, returned to the land of Israel and sought the lost inheritance. There they found a near relative, a kinsman, one through whom the lost inheritance could be bought back or redeemed. His name was Boaz and he was from Bethlehem.

Boaz agreed to pay the debt of Elimelech and Naomi and thereby redeem the inheritance. He also married the childless widow Ruth and raised children in the name of the dead husband, who as a consequence, it could be said, repossessed the inheritance.

Now Boaz, in redeeming the inheritance, was also under an obligation, if necessary, to avenge the death of the near of kin. The role of the kinsman/ redeemer was twofold: he was both a redeemer and an avenger.

The story in the Book of Ruth is a fitting representation of the history of the human race. Adam and Eve were established in Eden by the Creator (Micah 4:8 calls it *the first dominion*). By disobedience they sold their inheritance to Satan and went into the land of enemy, the land of death. However a remnant of Adam's family has subsequently sought to return to Eden and regain the lost inheritance. They found a near kinsman – one of their own race – through whom the inheritance can be redeemed and restored. This kinsman/redeemer, like Boaz, came from Bethlehem.

Jesus Christ has paid the debt of Adam's race upon Calvary's cross. By the sacrifice of His life, He has redeemed the lost inheritance. Like Boaz, He has also married the childless widow – the Christian Church: it is His bride. He is her spiritual husband and through this union Christ is raising up children, *the seed of the woman*, who one day will repossess the lost inheritance – Eden restored.

⁴ Weemse, *Judicial Law of Moses* chapter 30, quoted in Joseph A Seiss, *The Apocalypse - An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids MI: Kregel Publications, 1987 reprint), footnote page 112.

As kinsman/ redeemer, Jesus Christ will also be responsible for avenging the blood of his brethren. That will be accomplished at the second and third Advents, when He destroys Satan and all who support this renegade angel.

See Appendix A for a table of parallels between Boaz the earthly kinsman-redeemer and Jesus Christ the heavenly Redeemer.

Reclamation at Calvary

There are ten steps in the reclamation and restoration of the ultimate lost inheritance. Nine of those steps were taken at Calvary. The tenth step will take place at the second and third Advents of Christ.

Now, while Jesus paid the price of redemption at Calvary, the transaction was not effective until it was ratified in heaven, witnessed by the whole universe. This is the significance of the impressive ceremony in heaven, where before the assembled hosts Christ is pronounced as being worthy to take and open the scroll.

Jesus has won back the title-deeds. He gained the victory at Calvary by His selfless sacrifice. Now, before the universe, according to Revelation Chapter 5, this victory is confirmed: this is public ceremony enacted to demonstrate that His sacrifice is acceptable.

This procedure pinpoints the time when Revelation Chapter 5 was fulfilled - shortly after the ascension of Christ to heaven. The 24 elders declare that as a result of Christ taking the scroll they *shall reign on the earth*, confirming that by this act, the earth, the lost inheritance, was redeemed.

Some expositors claim that the opening of the scroll denotes that the destiny of the world is already determined, and that this opening occurred in 1844 in the pre-second advent judgment. Now, while it could be true that the reception of the scroll might involve the world's fate, the announcement made that the destiny of the world had been determined was made just after the crucifixion of Christ.

I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accused them before our God day and night... Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time". Revelation 12:10-12

This announcement must have been conclusively issued just after Calvary because it declares,

...now ...salvation (has) come...

The universal anthem of praise

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels around about the throne, the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing!

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 honour and glory and power be unto Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever".

And the four living creatures said, "Amen". And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshipped Him who lives for ever and ever. Revelation 5:11-14

Here we are given a glimpse of the heavenly host surrounding the throne of our God. The number of angels is stated as over one hundred million. What a scene this presents! Nor are these angels standing idly by, they are the special messengers of God, awaiting His command.

His angels... who do His word, heeding the voice of His word. Psalm 103:20

...hearkening to the voice of His word...ministers of His that do His pleasure. KJV

On this occasion the angels comprise a mighty mass choir. Imagine the majestic music as they render the sevenfold anthem of praise to the worthiness of the Lamb.

There are two phases to this anthem. Verses 11 and 12 contain the sevenfold anthem in praise of the lamb. Verses 13 and 14 contain a fourfold anthem from creatures in four locations - heaven, earth, under the earth and in the sea - in praise of the Father and the Lamb. It would seem that the second anthem could only be rendered when this earth is restored to harmony with the rest of the universe, for only then would *every creature...on the earth* render spontaneous praise to the Deity.

However in the setting of Revelation 5 this mighty anthem of praise bursts forth in response to the lamb taking hold of the scroll of redemption. The Spirit of Prophecy reveals that the anthem was sung by the heavenly hosts at the inauguration of Jesus as Mediator and High Priest.⁵ This possibly refers to that part of the anthem contained in v 11-12. The Spirit of Prophecy applies the whole anthem to the coronation of Jesus at the Second Advent.⁶

The third application by the Spirit of Prophecy is at Jesus' coronation at the Third Advent, after the millennium.⁷ A fourth application is made to the days of eternity⁸ when the redeemed render praise to the Father and the Son.⁹

An incorrect interpretation

Let us now examine the view that Revelation 4 and 5 involve the investigative judgment commencing in 1844, and that the sealed scroll is a book of record.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 832-835.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1898), 648; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1948), 8:44

Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 131.

⁷ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* 662-674.

⁸ *Ibid.* 651-652; 678.

⁹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church* 6:368

There are three main reasons given for promoting this view:

1. That Revelation chapters 4 and 5 parallel Daniel 7:9-10 which describes the judgment scene commencing in 1844.
2. That Revelation 6:10 indicates judgment as the theme of the vision of Chapters 4-6.
3. That the Spirit of Prophecy teaches that Revelation 5 involves judgment.

An examination of these three claims will establish whether or not the conclusions drawn are warranted.

Do Revelation Chapters 4 and 5 parallel Daniel 7: 9-10?

The following table details the differences between the imagery and statements from Revelation Chapters 4 and 5, on the one hand, and Daniel 7:9-10 on the other. It will be seen that these chapters do not depict an identical scene.

Comparison between Daniel 7: 9-10 and Revelation 4 and 5

Daniel 7: 9-10	Revelation 4 and 5
Vs 9 <i>The thrones were cast down</i> or placed in position; indicating a change of location.	4:2 <i>A throne was set</i> implying it is in position. There is no movement or change of location.
9-10 The Father is in purest white. <i>Garment white as snow</i> <i>Hair like pure wool.</i>	4:3 The Father is in reddish brightness. <i>Like a jasper – crystal brightness.</i> <i>and a sardine stone – reddish.</i>
9-10 The throne amid shades of fiery red. <i>His throne was like the fiery flame and its wheels as burning fire.</i>	4:3 The throne is amid shades of green <i>there was a rainbow round about the throne in sight like unto an emerald</i>
10 Flames of fiery red from the throne. <i>A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him</i>	4:5 Flashes of brilliant white from the throne. <i>from the throne proceeded lightnings</i>
9-10 An atmosphere of great solemnity. There is no praise.	4:8-11; 5:9-14 An atmosphere of deep gratitude and continuous praise.
9-10 No lamps of fire are visible.	4:5 Lamps of fire are prominent.
9-10 <i>The books (plural) are opened.</i> The heavenly court is in session.	3 <i>A book (singular) is sealed</i> - it cannot be opened.
9-10 These are Books of Record –kept by angels who know their contents.	3-4 No-one knows the book's contents or could look inside.
10, 13 Christ is absent when the books are opened. He is ushered into the court scene after their opening.	5:5-6 Christ is present when the book is presented ; but it is unopened until the final seal is removed - after the second Advent (Revelation 6:14-17)
10 Describes a judgment scene or court setting in the Most Holy place of the Heavenly Sanctuary.	4:5; 5:7-8 An inaugural scene in the Holy Place of the Heavenly Sanctuary, where Jesus is installed as Priest-King. The theme is the worthiness and power of the Lamb. There is not one word concerning judgment in the whole vision, only the lack of it. (Revelation 6:9-11)

Does Revelation 6:10 imply a connection to the investigative judgment?

Does Revelation 6:10 indicate that the theme of the vision in Chapters 4 and 5 concerns judgment? Let us analyze this verse. It concerns the fifth seal and reads,

*When he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. **And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?** Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said unto them that they should rest a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed. Revelation 6:9-11.*

Why do some scholars claim that Verse 10 expounds a theme of judgment? In reality the passage really presents a cry for justice: in fact in the whole of the vision there is no allusion to judgment at all. The hosts of martyrs who have fallen under the hooves of the fourth horseman are portrayed calling for justice, for redress long overdue.

In fact, not only is there a complete lack of any judgment scenario, what is presented is exactly the opposite of judgment. Consequently this is not a reference to the investigative judgment. Rather, this is a plea to God to avenge the murder of millions of saints during the period of the fourth horseman. Therefore the second ground for believing that Revelation Chapters 4 and 5 concerns judgment is without substance.

Does the Spirit of Prophecy indicate a connection to the pre-advent judgment?

Does the Spirit of Prophecy indicate that Revelation Chapters 4 and 5 involve the pre-advent judgment? Let us examine the first statement that its advocates use.

Thus the Jewish leaders made their choice. Their decision was registered in the book which John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, the book which no man could open. In all its vindictiveness this decision will appear before them in the day when this book is unsealed by the Lion of the tribe of Judah.¹⁰

What, in fact, does this statement refer to? It is an exposition of the parable of the vineyard, which Jesus gave to reveal how the Jewish leaders would murder him and seize the vineyard.¹¹ The Spirit of Prophecy follows with the statement

Thus the Jewish leaders made their choice... and this decision will appear before them in the day when this book is unsealed by the lion of the tribe of Judah.

Some have concluded that because this fearful crime was registered in the scroll of Revelation 5 that this scroll must be the book of records of Daniel 7:9-10, which involves the judgment of 1844. However the judgment referred to must be a judgment that is an executive judgment because it states that *this decision will appear **before them** in the day when this book is unsealed.*

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1900), 298.

¹¹ Matthew 31:33-46.

When is it that the Jewish leaders will be resurrected to see their record? The Spirit of Prophecy says that it will be *in the day that this book is unsealed*. And when will the final seal be removed from the book? According to the sixth seal, it will be at the Second Advent.

Will the Jewish leaders be alive at the Second Advent to be confronted with the results of their decision? They will. The Jewish leaders, with other malefactors, will be resurrected in the partial resurrection as described in Daniel 12:2, Matthew 26:64 and Revelation 1:7.

*Those that mocked and derided Christ's dying agonies, and the most violent opposers of his truth and his people, are raised to behold him in his glory, and to see the honor placed upon the loyal and obedient.*¹²

There are those who mocked Christ in his humiliation. With thrilling power come to their minds the Sufferer's words when, adjured by the high priest, he solemnly declared, 'Hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven'. Matthew 26:64

*Now they behold him in his glory... With awful distinctness do priests and rulers recall the events of Calvary. ... Vividly they recall the Saviour's parable of the husbandman who... abused his servants and slew his son.... priests and elders see their own course and their own just doom... They seek to flee from the presence of the King of kings. In the deep caverns of the earth, rent asunder by the warring of the elements, they vainly attempt to hide.*¹³

This Spirit of Prophecy prediction could also have a second application after the resurrection of the unsaved at the end of the thousand years of Revelation 20. Once again the Jewish leaders will be resurrected and will face their damning record, to be judged according to their works (Revelation 20:12).

If the scroll of Revelation 5 is not a book of record, why is the Jewish leaders' decision registered in it? If this book contains the title-deeds, then the essential details of every conveyance of property would be recorded there.

Legal authorities state that title deeds should contain an unbroken chain relative to how and when each conveyance was transacted, demonstrating that it was legal and proper. The reason the Jewish leaders' decision was registered, was because they took possession of the inheritance illegally.

This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance. Matthew 21:38

They killed the Son of God and seized the inheritance and that dastardly, illegal act was recorded in the title deeds. In the executive judgment, when they face *the lion of the tribe of Judah*, the Jewish leaders will be called to answer for their momentous crime.

A second Spirit of Prophecy statement is used to advocate that Revelation 4 and 5 concerns judgment.

¹² Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* 637.

¹³ Ibid. 643-644.

*What will such a one do in the day that the books are opened and every man is judged according to the things written in the books? The fifth chapter of Revelation needs to be closely studied. It is of great importance to those who shall act a part in the work of God for these last days. There are some who are deceived. They do not realize what is coming on the earth. Those who have permitted their minds to become beclouded in regard to what constitutes sin are fearfully deceived. Unless they make a decided change they will be found wanting when God pronounces judgment upon the children of men.*¹⁴

Does this passage refer to the investigative judgment of 1844? The context shows that the prophet is writing to certain leaders in Battle Creek in 1909. These leaders were shutting their eyes to truth, persisting in teaching error and leading God's people astray. They were warned that if they did not repent, they would face the judgment when the books are opened and every man is judged according to the things written in the books. The Spirit of Prophecy refers here to the executive judgment which involves the second and third advents. It is the executive judgment of the unsaved, not the investigative judgment of 1844.

In this setting, the prophet then counsels

*the fifth chapter of Revelation needs to be closely studied. It is of great importance to those who shall act a part in God's work for these last days.*¹³

What does Revelation 5 have to do with the executive judgment? That is the day when the book of redemption containing the title-deeds, will be opened. The seventh seal of the scroll will be removed at the Second Advent and then the book is opened. At that time Christ, as the Kinsman/Redeemer, will avenge the wrongs done against his people. As *the Lion of the tribe of Judah* he will manifest himself as Judge and Avenger.

Dangers of leading others astray

The Spirit of Prophecy says of those who are guilty of leading others astray

*... they do not realize what is coming on the earth.*¹³

What, ultimately, is coming on the earth? The prophet then describes the terrible events which occur at the close of the sixth seal, when the lost flee from the wrath of the Lamb *for the great day of his wrath is come*. Thus the judgment referred to by the prophet is the executive judgment, not the pre-advent judgment of 1844. There are no grounds whatsoever for associating Revelation 5 with the investigative judgment.

¹⁴ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church* 9:266-267.

The true message of Revelation 5

The message of Revelation Chapter 5 is that Christ is the slain lamb who takes away all confessed sin – the one who is worthy to receive *power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing* and the one who is worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals. It leads us into Revelation Chapter 6 where we find that in the day of executive judgment Christ will nevertheless deal in awful justice with those who have treated sin lightly and have led others astray.

Revelation Chapter 5 introduces the seven seals of the Book of Revelation. Understanding this chapter's true meaning and message will help us to interpret the seven seals correctly.

Appendix A

Parallels between Israel and Boaz the kinsman-redeemer and God's people and Jesus Christ the Redeemer

Boaz	Jesus Christ
Israel was established in Palestine as God's chosen people.	The human race, in Adam & Eve, were established in Eden as God's chosen
The land of Israel – the Promised Land.	Typical of the renewed earth - the land of promise Romans 4:13, Hebrews 11:13-16.
A family in Israel, in distrust of God, sell their inheritance and dwell in Moab, the land of the enemy.	Adam & Eve, in distrust of God, sold out their inheritance to Satan and dwelt in the land of the enemy.
Moab was a land of death – father & two sons die.	This world is a land of death. <i>Death passed upon all men</i> Romans 5:12
A remnant of the family - Naomi & Ruth -return to Israel to seek the lost inheritance.	A remnant of the family of Adam seek for the lost inheritance, which will be the renewed earth – Eden restored.
A near relative, a kinsman, is found through whom the lost inheritance can be bought back or redeemed.	A near kinsman is found, Jesus Christ <i>in all things made like His brethren</i> , through whom the lost inheritance is redeemed and restored
Boaz pays the debt of Elimelech and Naomi, and thereby redeems the inheritance.	Jesus Christ, by becoming man and dying upon the cross has paid the debt of Adam's family and thereby has redeemed the lost inheritance of Eden.
Boaz married the childless widow Ruth and in the name of the dead husband raised up children who repossessed the inheritance.	Jesus Christ marries the childless widow -the church. She is his spiritual bride and He is raising up children (<i>the seed of the woman</i>) who will possess the kingdom.
Boaz, as Kinsman-Redeemer, not only redeemed the lost inheritance but was also under obligation, if necessary, to avenge the death of the near of kin.	Jesus Christ as the true Kinsman -Redeemer, redeemed the inheritance of Eden lost. He will occupy it and be responsible for avenging the blood of his brethren at the Second & Third Advents. He destroys Satan and his followers, then cleanses and restores this earth to its original condition.

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