



REVELATION 5 STUDY GUIDE

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CONTEXT

William Hendrickson suggests there are seven cycles in Revelation telling the same basic story that begins after the introduction of Revelation 1.

- **CYCLE #1 - Revelation 2-3: The Seven Churches.** In the letters to the seven churches, Christ assures these congregations that he knows them personally. He knows what they are going through. He knows their cares, and he calls upon them to stay faithful. If they overcome, they will receive eternal rewards of life with God.
- **CYCLE #2 - Revelation 4-7: The Seven Seals.** The second cycle, beginning in chapter five here, describes a scroll sealed with seven seals. It is perfectly closed to prying eyes. This sealed scroll is in God's right hand, and none are found worthy to open the seal at first until a Lamb appears that appears once killed but is now alive. Through the following chapters, the seals are opened with 144,000 along with a countless multitude in white praising God. Revelation 7:14 describes these worshipers as those who have overcome persecution and tribulation. They are awe-struck at the outcome of the sealed scroll.
- **CYCLE #3 - Revelation 8-11: The Seven Trumpets.** The seven trumpets herald warnings. Revelation 11:15 records the final trumpet signaling God's assumption of his people in his kingdom. No nation can stand against this kingdom, and the temple of God opens revealing the ark of his covenant. Judgment is delivered to those who reject God, and his people are brought to their reward.
- **CYCLE #4 - Revelation 12-14: The Enemies of God.** Satan is identified as a dragon in Revelation 12:9. As this cycle concludes, the theme of hope returns, promising rest from labors for those remaining steadfast in the Lord's work.
- **CYCLE #5 - Revelation 15-16: The Seven Bowls.** These bowls depict God's wrath with God's patient warnings giving way to judgment. The theme of hope repeats even among these terrible events. Those

clothing themselves with Christ and acts of righteousness escape judgment. Jesus says to watch, remain prepared, and keep our garments of holiness clean.

- **CYCLE #6 - Revelation 17-19: The Judgment of Harlot.** A key to revelation is identifying the harlot city of Revelation 17. It is described as the great city that rules over the world. Her expressiveness makes the world rich, but an angel proclaims how great her fall will be. In this fall, God's saints praise him for purging the world of this corrupting influence.
- **CYCLE #7 - Revelation 20-22: The Final Judgment and Reward.** The final cycle depicts the marriage supper of the Lamb and his church, arrayed in the white garments of the righteous acts of her members. Revelation 20:11 describes a great white throne before which none could hide. The Book of Life is opened, and all are judged according to their works. Death is no more, and God's realm is described as a garden much like Eden, repeating the promise of hope to the faithful.

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MORE EXPANSIVE LOOK AT REVELATION 5....

1. THE SCROLL (5:1-2)

Literally, in Greek, the word scroll here is "little book." And this little book is in the right hand of him who sits on the throne. On the right hand, as you may know in Scripture, is always a place of power, authority, and sovereignty.

And this scroll / book is amazing because, unlike all other writings in John's day, it was written on *both* sides ("and on the back" – ESV, Rev. 5:1). Scrolls were only meant to be written on the inside. Scrolls were about 30 feet long and they were rolled up. If there's was writing on the outside, it could damage the scroll.

But this scroll is *undamaged*. It's perfect and it's written on the outside and on the inside. It is full of writing.

What's more, this scroll is also unique in that, instead of being sealed with one seal, which holds it together and keeps it from being ripped open accidentally, it is sealed with seven (7) seals. And, remember, seven is the number of *perfection*. This shows that what is in the scroll is not only perfect, but there is a completeness about this scroll that no man can invent, can give, or can open.

Scrolls in those days needed a certain amount of security, and particularly important scrolls would sometimes be sealed with two seals. But here is a scroll like no other: written on the inside, written on the outside, and sealed with seven seals. Quite a difference, isn't it?

While there are many interpretations about what this scroll is (the Book of Life, the sins of mankind, the prophecies of the book, etc.), it seems to me (Darin) what this scroll is clear: The scroll stands for the *eternal decrees* of God (See Daniel 12:4). In other words, the scroll of Revelation 5 symbolizes for us God's plan and God's purpose for the entire universe throughout history that concerns all creatures and all ages to all eternity.

A summary of the scroll:

- It is absolutely comprehensive, absolutely detailed.
 - There's a fixed plan in this scroll—a perfect plan.
 - There are no mistakes, no erasers, no room for any human addition, or no tolerance for any human subtraction.
- In this scroll is written all that God would do from eternity- to-eternity on the face of this earth.
 - From the fall of every hair on your head, dear TVBC Christian, to major events in society like 9/11 or World War 2, to everything that there is in this world, to the church's purpose here, to the elections of 2024 in America ... all that is written on this scroll.
 - Every atom on the earth, as well as the mighty galaxies are also all there in the scroll

- Nothing is missing!
- Notice, further, that this is a noble and majestic scroll.
 - There are no blank places in this scroll, no white spaces, and no gaps.
 - It embraces every creature, every action, and every human decision you make is all a part of God's plan.
 - There are no points in this scroll with hesitation, no uncertain days, no surprises for God, or no facing of emergencies for the Almighty.

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APPLICATION

Aren't you grateful that this affirms to us, once again, that God knows all our yesterdays, all our todays, and all our tomorrows? Nothing is omitted, nothing unprovided for, and nothing unseen. All is in his book that he holds in his right hand, sealed with seven seals. And John can see the book, but he can't see what's in the book. No man can see, says our text, what is "written within" (Rev. 5:1b).

“And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it” (Rev. 5:3).

You see, our knowledge is always limited. We look at the upcoming 2024 elections, for example, and we might be filled with fear. We just can't imagine a people electing in our land a government that would sanction things the Bible condemns. It is such violent contradiction to the Word of God.

But we don't know what's coming. We don't know who's going to win, and we don't know what the winner will bring. We know that crisis is coming again, but we don't know when.

And, honestly, there's so much we don't know. You see, there's so much in this scroll that is secret; it is really the secret will of God contained therein (read Deut. 29:29!). And, yet, there's something about this scroll that is incredibly comforting.

Do you remember that's the whole purpose of the book of Revelation? To comfort the persecuted church of God. This is a pastoral book. This isn't a book, you may remember, to explore about every detail that's going to happen tomorrow, so we can make outlandish predictions. Revelation is not a horoscope or puzzle book.

No, Revelation is a book for God's persecuted people. It's a book that God says to us: "All things are in My hands, and I am on the throne, and I will make no mistakes."

What God is saying to John—who's on the Isle of Patmos because of persecution and has every human reason to be discouraged—

"John, don't be discouraged. Lay hold of this great truth. I bring you, John, figuratively by vision into the throne room of heaven so that you may be comforted by this. At all details, all things are in my hand. I am the monarch of all, and I survey all, and I work all according to my plan."

John, weep not! John, there's no empty space in my calendar book. There's no independent agency that can come in and thwart my plans. No man, no angel, or no devil can add anything to my record. This is not a partial record, John; this is not a general program, John; this is a detailed plan in every detail of your life, John, and the life of all my people to the end of the world, is written in this scroll."

What a great lesson to us! We aren't the masters of our own fate or the captains of our own ship. Rather, our Lord, who sits on the throne, is in charge. He doesn't just foresee that we're going to believe (as some say) and then quickly write it in his scroll.

No, our living God knows all things from all eternity. He's decreed it all. He has no contingency plans. He has only real plans (Daniel 4:34-35). And his plans will be effectual and those plans will all serve that eternal design—the glory of his Son, whom he loves with unspeakable love.

But that begs the question: How are these plans going to be carried out? How is God going to execute this amazing scroll? That's the question of verse 2, isn't it?

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“And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice – ‘Who is worthy to open the scroll and open its seals?’” (Rev. 5:2)

You see, the breaking of the seals and the opening of the book is more than just a revelation of God's kingdom. It is also a *realization* of God's kingdom.

The task isn't just who can open or rip it open. The bigger question is: “Who can execute God’s plan? Who can realize his decrees? Who can carry out the purposes of this universe?”

And the answer is a deafening silence. A loud voice of the strong angel reverberates throughout the heavenly throne room. No doubt, you could hear a pin drop because no one has the answer. John realizes no one—no man, woman, or child, no angel, etc.—is found worthy to open the scroll.

And, you see, that's true of all of us, isn't it? We're all sinners (Rom. 3:10, 23). We've forfeited the right to God's guiding and leading. We desperately need a mediator (1 Tim. 2:5). We can't control the universe and we can't advance the kingdom of God in our strength (John 15!).

There, then, in that silence, John understands human leaders, human history, and human anything is not strong enough or worthy enough to lead the universe.

As we enter another election season in the coming months, we need to remember that no one man or woman is our answer. No election can give America what it needs. The future of this country, the future of Tower View, the future of your family, and the future of your own soul doesn't lie in human hands.

And this is overwhelming for John, so he breaks out into weeping (5:4-5). His weeping is uncontrollable and inconsolable.

He says, "I wept loudly." Who, in all the created world, can carry out God's purposes, advance God's program, and promote God's plans? No one! So, John weeps.

You know, it's amazing when you look at the tears of the New Testament Christians. It seems they're always weeping over *spiritual* things. They are *never* weeping over *selfish* things. They're always weeping over the need for forgiveness or for the world's need for forgiveness.

Examples:

- Peter wept because of sin (John 21);
- The Apostle Paul wept because his kinsmen, according to the flesh, weren't turning to Christ (Rom. 9:1-5);
- Jesus himself wept over the hardness of Jerusalem's hearts (Luke 19:41-44).
- John weeps because no one can open the scroll. All of these examples are evangelistic tears.

Like John, have you ever wept a tear over the soul of anyone? Maybe your own soul, the souls of your children or grandchildren, your family, your church, your nation, your neighborhood, and this world? It is, certainly, a sign of understanding God's sovereignty and your purpose in this life!

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Then in Rev. 5:5 an elder comes for John. (Side note: this is the kind of elder you want to have in your church – they come for you!).

The elder says, "John, you're not seeing the whole picture. You haven't seen yet everything in this throne room. Look at the center of the throne room, John. Look to the center of heaven."

And as John moves his eyes from the hand and the scroll in the hand of God Almighty, the elder says, "Behold, look, John! Behold, the Lion, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has prevailed to open the book. He has conquered, John! Look at him, the Messiah, the Lion of the tribe of Judah."

So, John's eyes moved from looking at the scroll in the hand of God Almighty to looking at the lion-like king. And that is what Jesus is—the Lion King. His immense power, majesty, and strength possess him like a lion.

Yes, he does mighty works, holy works, and powerful works. Jesus also:

- leads the church through history,
- advances the kingdom of God,
- triumphs over his enemies,
- puts Satan and the world on notice and death and grief underfoot.

The lion is standing at the center of the throne (Rev. 5:6). He stands not only victorious, but he stands there because he has brought redemption to his people. What is he doing?

- He is sending forth his spirit;
- he's building his church;
- he's ruling;
- he's active in the government of this kingdom; and,
- He ever lives to make intercession, even for those who come to him, saving them to the uttermost.

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2. SAVIOR (5:6-10)

So, as John's tears dry up, there's the Lion King. But as John gazes upon him, a shock fills his being. This lion is also a lamb.

"In the midst of the elders stood a lamb as it had been slain" (5:6)

A lion-lamb king is in the midst of the throne. Now, John uses that particular word for lamb here that he uses 27 other times in the book of Revelation. It is only used one other time in the New Testament. It's a little form of lamb. That is, a lamb who's made himself small, as it were, through suffering and death. This lamb didn't reach the fullness of maturity and was cut off in the midst of his years.

But this strong lion lamb is going to implement the program of God. Not through the brute force of the power of a lion, but on the basis that he is the atoning sacrifice of the living God.

Moreover, even in the throne room of heaven today, Jesus is enthroned as the Lamb. And that's why, if you're a Christian, you will be invited on the great day to join the marriage supper of the Lamb. This is John's amazing imagery and vision. The victory is in the hands of the Lion-Lamb.

This Lamb became man, suffered, agonized, hung his naked body on the cross, was an object of shame and pain, and was a cursed seed. But when he arose from the dead on that third day, he arose as the Almighty, victorious One. Jesus is now a wonderful combination of Lion and Lamb—full of the strength and full of the Spirit of God.

Therefore, the 5:6 goes on to say:

“He has seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth” (KJV).

All this imagery, of course, points us back to Genesis 22, where **Isaac** said, “Where is the lamb?” and **Abraham** says, “God Himself shall provide the lamb for an offering.” It takes us back to Israel's Passover lamb in Exodus. And it takes us back to **John the Baptist** pointing, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

And now, in Heaven's throne room, all of heaven looks at this Lion-Lamb, this glorious Savior, this Redeemer King.

Some notes on Revelation 5:6:

- Horns were the symbol of an animal's power. So, seven horns = completeness.
- Seven-fold Spirit = fullness of the Holy Spirit

It is almost like all of heaven says:

“You are worthy to open the book and to break the seals, for you are no mere creature, you are no sinful, unworthy creature. You have seven horns, you have complete power, you're omnipotent, and you know everything. You understand the purposes and the plans that are written in the book.

And you have the Sevenfold Spirit. The Spirit anoints you, Lion-Lamb, without measure, completely and perfectly. You have all the resources of the Trinity to carry out the plans and purposes of your Father.

And you are the Son of God. You Lamb-Lion-Son of God, you are the one, the only one, who can open the book. And the book that is already sprinkled with your own blood.”

May we remember: The Lion-Lamb King, Jesus, is the answer for every need we have!

Yes, the answer for the one who can open the books of God from eternity, but also can open our hearts and make us willing subjects of his power.

“Weep not,” says the elder (Rev. 5:5). “Weep not, John; dry up your tears. There is someone here, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Lamb of God.” John says, “I stood in a midst of a lamb as it had been slain” (Rev. 5:6).

This is a picture of the gospel. The gospel is victory through bloody sacrifice. The gospel is that you have a King-Priest in heaven. He's a Priest who's poured out his blood and was perfectly innocent to satisfy the justice of God on your behalf.

Have you ever understood that about the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you ever brought these two things together in him— a Lion and a Lamb? And have you ever seen that, in God's book, this combination is eternally decreed and eternally powerful?

The Lion-Lamb, like this King, always prevails. He gives himself as a Lamb to the slaughter. Yet, all the while, he's a Lion internally. He will endure to the end. He will pay the whole price of our sin and he will drink the cup of his Father's wrath to its bottom bitter dregs. He will overcome sin and the devil and death.

And at this very moment, he reigns as heaven's Lion-Lamb. Because of that combo, he breaks open the seals of the book of God. And all of heaven's resources, centering on this Lamb-Lion, are committed to carrying out his eternal policy book. What a mix of majesty and mercy, deity and humanity, and strength and Lamb-likeness that meet us in Jesus, who is worthy to open the book.

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In Revelation 4, the throne was at the center of the universe. However, now John sees that at the center of the throne the Savior. Nothing, nothing in all of history is so central as the Lion-Lamb. The supremacy of Jesus Christ in history is vindicated in John's amazing vision of Revelation 5.

"What a great reminder that, like the old church song for kids, "He's got the whole world in his hands!" It's Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, who's the center of the universe.

This is our comfort in or /when:

- Pandemic;
- persecution;
- national self-destruction;
- we see children wander away and become prodigal.
- hear the news, "You've got cancer," or "You've had a stroke."

Everything revolves around Jesus, everything is about Him, and everything will end in him. He's the center, he's the Lion and the Lamb.

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3. SPONTANEOUS SONG (5:11-14)

No wonder that heaven breaks loose now into spontaneous song! And now, when Jesus Christ takes the book, all of heaven, from Rev. 5:8-13, breaks out into spontaneous outbursts of praise and song. And there are actually three songs:

- **Song #1 – Rev. 5:8** – a song of redemption: "And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."
- **Song #2 – Rev. 5:11**— "Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands."
 - The camera moves away from the children of God who are right around the throne of the Lamb.
 - And it has have moved to show / hear a choir coming from the angels.
- **Song #3 – Rev. 5:13-14** – "And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!'" And then, in verse 14, we're told that this great triple heavenly choir responds with a magnificent rendition of 'Amen.'

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What a marvelous picture of what heaven will be like! What a marvelous chorus of praise will ascend unitedly from heaven's majestic choir from saints (Rev. 5:9) from every kindred, tongue, people, and nation. Each will be delighting in and praising Christ with full of reverence and praise for him, and all will be in perfect harmony. They will all praise God for being saved by Christ's blood (Rev. 5:10). What an awesome future with an amazingly awesome God we have – all because of Christ finished work (John 19:30)!

The 24 elders of Revelation 4 represent the entire church of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Indeed, it's one church: 12 patriarchs and 12 apostles. They are representing the whole company of God's people and are right there at the very center of everything in heaven around the throne of the Lamb.

Notice, too, that they have something to say beyond what the other groups say. The song of the redeemed is fuller, deeper, and more profound than the song of the angels and the song of creation.

And why is that so? Because we've been saved from our sin. We enter into an intimacy in heaven with God, with the Lamb on the throne, but even the angels cannot enter into that. Angels are spectators in the drama of salvation. First Peter 1:10-12 tells us that they are deeply interested in what God does in the lives of sinners because they yearn for the glory of God.

Luke 15:10 says:

"I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repent."

And John, in his vision, even pictures the very creation itself chiming in. As Paul puts it in Romans 8:19-22:

"For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now."

Paul tells us creation is waiting for the adoption of sons and the redemption of the body. The very sticks, stones, hills, the fish, and the whole creation is, as it were, are standing on tiptoe, craning its neck, waiting, and trying to look over the shoulders of the angels. Or, perhaps, at the church, waiting for salvation to be completed so that there will be a new heavens and a new earth where righteousness dwells—and man's sin will no more stain even this earthly creation.

When Christ is turning the pages of your life, your family's, your congregation's and our nation's, knowing what he is doing, why should we weep?

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Marks of those who are around the throne...

#1 – They have a trust in Christ's blood alone for salvation (5:9).

It's all about Christ's blood. It's not about our sweat, tears, or our blood. No, it is the perfect, righteous blood of Jesus himself. Notice, too, there's particularity here. He dies for particular individuals. This is not nationalistic. And this knows no ethnic groups, linguistic groups, political groups, or social groups. But from *every* tribe, he says, and every kindred, every people, and every nation. God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:28, 34-25). In his sovereign plan, God draws his chosen ones (Eph. 1; Rom. 9) from every group and welcomes every type of person. And only in his blood is redemption found for every of the elect to find redemption. Is that blood your only hope for salvation? Is your soul resting in the blood of Christ?

#2 – They are praising and praying people (Rev. 5:8).

John is saying to us that the prayers of believers, despite all their imperfections, are as sweet to Christ as incense, for Christ sanctifies them and Christ makes them acceptable to the Father.

Charles Spurgeon put it this way:

"If we could see one of our prayers after Jesus Christ has amended them, we should scarce and know it again. He has such skill that even our good flowers grow fairer in His hand. We clumsily tie them into a bundle, but He arranges them into a beautiful bouquet" (<https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/golden-vials-full-of-odours/#flipbook/>).

Thank the Lord that our bumbling, stumbling prayers are sweet to God. And to praise God with our stumbling words through prayer and to have our hearts swell with adoration and gratitude for his mercies to us is evidence we know him.

#3 - They delight in Christ as the center of their lives.

They're happy that Christ is on the throne and not themselves. And that's something human nature never agrees to but grace does. They're so happy that Christ is the focus of heaven!

In Revelation 5, everything is delighted with the Lord Jesus Christ. What about you? Are you delighted with him as well? Are these three marks present in your life? Do you know him?

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STUDY QUESTIONS

Read Revelation 5 and then answer the following question.

1. What individuals and groups are involved here?
2. What do we learn about the Lamb before he is even introduced?
3. See Dan. 9:2; 12:4 for divine books with plans. What do you learn there?
4. How is the Lamb described? Who is he? What do we learn about him?
5. How is he worthy?
6. What do we learn about redemption?

7. How should we react to the descriptions of worship?

8. How does this vision anticipate the end of all things?

9. How does this vision challenge you in your relation to God?