

Revelation 5: The Worthy Lamb

Double-sided scroll on the hand of God- Ezekiel 2.9f; Daniel 12.4; Isaiah 29.11; Jeremiah 36

A 1C scroll (*Biblion*) was made of strips of papyrus laid end to end and glued together to form a lengthy strip that could be rolled up. The papyrus was formed when strips of pith from a papyrus plant were laid in two layers at right angles to each other, then beaten, pressed, and smoothed to form a type of paper. They were often thirty feet long. Scrolls with writing on both sides were called opisthographs. Scrolls were sealed with wax or clay blobs marked by a signet ring. (Lemaire ABD 6:1003-4)

What is this scroll?

1. Lambs Book of Life: 3.5; 13.8; 17.8; 20.12-15; 21.27, containing the names of the redeemed
2. A doubly signed contract deed, sealed with a description of the contents written on the outside. (Roller, Lohse, Beasley-Murray, Beale)
3. A heavenly book 'containing God's redemptive plan and the future history of God's creation' (Caird, Ladd, Talbert, Mounce, Thomas), detailing the prophecies of Revelation and the judgment of God. (1 Enoch 47.3; 81.1-3; 106.19; 107.1)

'Seven seals' point to completeness, the perfect fulfillment of God's divine plan.

5.2-5: One Worthy to Open the Book

Angelon ischyron – a mighty angel

Tis axios – Who is worthy?

'In Heaven, on earth, under the earth' – common Jewish division (Exodus 20.4, 11; Job 11.8-9; Ps. 146.6)

Why is John weeping? (4.1)

5.5 – a word from one of the 24 elders. What does he say?

1 Corinthians 15.54: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

The Lion of Judah and the Root of Jesse –

Genesis 49.9: "Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?"

Isaiah 11.10: "In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations enquire, and his resting-place shall be glorious."

YHWH as a divine warrior: Job 10.16; Isaiah 31.4; Jer. 50.44; Hosea 5.14; Amos 3.8

The image underlines the Messiah's military prowess and victory over His enemies. (Geysler)

Root of Jesse – Matthew 1.1, 20; 9.7; 12.23; 15.22; 20.30-31

5.6-10: The Lamb Takes the Scroll

Why is the Lion transformed into a lamb?

The victory is won at the Cross!

The Paschal Lamb – Exodus 11-12; 29; Numbers 28-29

Isaiah 53.5-7: “But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.”

John 1.29, 35: “The next day he (John) saw Jesus coming towards him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”; Acts 8.32; 1 Cor. 5.7; 1 Peter 1.19

In Revelation, the Lamb has two aspects, the sacrificial lamb and the military ram, and they are interconnected, standing at the heart of the book and depicting the two sides of God's activity, His mercy and His justice. (Osborne 256)

Horns – 1 Enoch 90.9; Daniel 7.7, 20

Zechariah 4.10: “These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range through the whole earth.”

5.8-10: Worship of the Lamb

Harp – David's instrument (1 Samuel 16.16; Ps. 33.2; 57.8; 98.5; 147.7)

Golden bowls – placed on the table of the Bread of the Presence (Exodus 25.29; 37.16)

The ‘New Song’ (Isaiah 42.10): What is it about?

Purchased – *egorasas*: a commercial metaphor used for the freeing of a prisoner of war from bondage. (Schussler-Fiorenza). 1 Corinthians 6.19-20; 7.23; 2 Peter 2.1; Revelation 14.3-4)

The point: ‘Christ's sacrifice has made it possible for all of God's people drawn from the nations to be both royalty and priests in the New Kingdom of God.’ (Osborne 261); Daniel 7.14

11-12 *myriades myriadon* – the highest number in the Greco-Roman world

Revelation 6.1-8.1: Opening the Seals

6.1-17: The First Six Seals

6.1-8: The Four Horsemen

Zechariah 1.7-11; 6.1-8; also Jeremiah 15.2; Ezekiel 5.12

The Lamb opens a seal and one of the four living creatures speaks: 'Come!'

Common themes: captivity, sword, famine, death

'God is allowing the depravity of men to come full circle.' (O'Donovan 1986: 71-73)

Living Creatures:

- Lead heavenly worship (4.8-9; 5.8-10, 14; 19.4)
- Form an inner group in the throne retinue (4.6; 5.6, 11; 7.11; 14.3)
- Implement divine judgment (6.1, 3, 5-7; 15.7)

6.1-2: The First Horseman – White: Lust for Conquest

Description closely resembles the Parthians, the only military force in the ancient world feared by the Romans after defeating them in 55 B.C. and A.D. 62. A warlike federation of tribes east of the Euphrates, they were famous cavalry fighters who could shoot accurately from the horse.

'conquering and to conquer' – an idiom that stresses that the figure's supreme activity and purpose is military conquest

Jesus? Revelation 19.11-16

6.3-4: The Second Horseman – Red: War

God allows human depravity to come full circle. Here, the lust for conquest turns to civil war, utterly self-destructive.

Pyrros: 'Fiery red' – symbolizes the bloodshed and slaughter he brings

The rider is allowed to do three things:

1. Take peace from the earth
2. Cause people to kill one another

3. Use the sword for murderous destruction

Mark 13.7-8: "And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains."

'slay' – *sphaxousin* – 'to slaughter'

6.5-6: The Third Horseman – Black: Famine

'and I looked'

The black horse signifies the sorrow and mourning caused by the famine and suffering that follow war. (Osborne 279)

'pair of scales' – purpose of scales in the ancient world was to ensure justice.

Proverbs 16.11: 'Honest scales and balances are from the LORD'

Here, they likely remind the reader of the exorbitant prices caused by famine and severe food shortages.

'a quart of wheat for a denarius and three quarts of barley for a denarius' - Wheat and barley were the essential staples in the Roman world. A quart would represent food for one day for one person. These prices were 10-12 times the rate in first century Asia Minor (Mounce 1998: 144 cites Cicero *Verr.* 3.81)

In A.D. 90, there was a food shortage, and Emperor Domitian decreed that half the vineyards in Asia Minor be cut down and replaced with grain. The furor was so great that the Emperor rescinded the order.

6.6-7: The Fourth Horseman – Pale Green: Disease

The color of disease and death.

Death followed by Hades – death by plague.

'one-fourth of the earth'

Ezekiel 14.21: 'How much worse will it be when I send against Jerusalem my four dreadful judgments – sword and famine and wild beasts and plague?'