

I. BACKGROUND:

A. About 2,600 years ago, Daniel was told to seal up his prophecies until the end of the age (Dan. 12:4).

B. Little interest in prophecy; "closed subject".

One of the unique things about the Bible - it speaks with the same matter-of-fact tone about things Man has never seen as it does common, ordinary things. Book of Revelation talks with unwavering assurance about our magnificent eternal dwelling place. It describes with authority what will take place upon the earth after the Church has been removed. The 7-year Tribulation then begins; culminating with Jesus' physical and literal return. The human race will witness the most terrible judgments ever seen. BUT... before any judgments fall, a portentous scene unfolds in Heaven. This event is described in Revelation ch.5.

II. TEXT: In ch. 5 John tells us of the first events after the Rapture of the Church: the unsealing of a scroll which will unleash the wrath of God against a fallen world and Satan's puppet, the antichrist. John also describes the dramatic search for a worthy person to open the scroll and set in motion its dreadful forces.

READ vv.1-4

v. 1 "Scroll" written "**on both sides.**" Greek is βιβλίον; made of papyrus. It's a certificate of redemption; the "title-deed" to planet earth, if you will. Wills of both Caesar Augustus and Vespasian were sealed w/ 7 seals; indicates its inviolability; it can't be violated (opened), except by One who has the proper authority.

- Hebrew redemption law.... Jeremiah buys Hanamel's field: Jer. 32:7-12 "... my cousin Hanamel came to me in the courtyard of the guard and said, 'Buy my field at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. Since it is your right to redeem it and possess it, buy it for yourself.' I knew that this was the word of the LORD; so I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel and weighed out for him 17 shekels of silver. I signed and sealed the deed, had it witnessed, and weighed out the silver on the scales. I took the deed of purchase-- the sealed copy containing the terms and conditions, as well as the unsealed copy-- and I gave this deed to Baruch son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, in the presence of my cousin Hanamel and of the witnesses who had signed the deed and of all the Jews sitting in the courtyard of the guard."
- Originally, Adam and Eve had "**dominion**" (KJV; "rule" NIV; Gen. 1:26 *raw-DAW* -- to tread down, that is, to subjugate; to have dominion over; reign, rule over).
Gen. 1:28-2:17: Adam and Eve lost the right to rule, or have dominion over the earth, by their sin and forfeited it to Satan: Now the ground cursed (needing redemption) and Man needed redemption. (Cf. v.9 "*with your blood you purchased men* [past tense] *you have made them* [past tense] *to be a Kingdom and priests to serve our God* [present tense]).
- Satan is called the "*prince of the power of the air*" (Eph. 2:2) and the "*god of this world*" (2 Cor. 4:4) and "*prince [or ruler] of this world*" THREE times by Jesus! (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). In other words, when Adam and Eve sinned, title-deed to planet earth was given to Satan and their right to rule forfeited.

v. 2 "Who is worthy?" Not you or I! In other words, "who is able to meet the requirements, to pay off the debt?" "Who has the RIGHT of redemption?" "Who can pay the price for Man's sin?" "Who can redeem us from the grip of the 'Strong Man'?" (Luke 11:21); the "Prince of this world?"

Notice he does not say "Who is *willing*..." Alexander the Great was willing; Genghis Khan, Charlemagne, Napoleon, Hitler – ALL were willing; ALL wanted power and to have a crack at ruling the earth!

"**Worthy**" is the Greek term, *axios*, "of equal weight." "Who is able? Who is equal to the task? Who has comparable strength, power, ability, sinlessness?" JESUS alone is equal to the task!

v. 4 John began to sob convulsively. **Why?** Because it meant that the world would go on forever in Satan's power and control. Such a thing was unthinkable in the mind of John. We see the world today and the tragic results of man's submission to Satan's authority -- the sicknesses, the sorrows, and the sufferings. To think that we would have to go on forever in this condition would be the saddest imaginable thing!

v. 5 **"Elders"** -- The 24 elders have received their rewards, wear crowns, and are dressed in white garments (as Christ encouraged the Church to do: Angels never called "elders" [Jewish background, *presbuteroi*. Titus 1:5-7 "elder," overseer, *episkopoi*]).

How did the Church get up there? RAPTURE! Notice the Church is in Heaven BEFORE THE FIRST JUDGMENT SEAL IS OPENED!

One *"worthy"* to redeem planet earth -- JESUS! Only a **"worthy" person** - someone with proper authority could open it. In Hebrew land redemption laws, the forfeited land deed was recorded on scroll, sealed seven times. Conditions necessary to redeem written on outside of scroll. When a qualified redeemer (*go-el*) could be found, the property was returned.

- One had to MEET THE QUALIFICATIONS (be in the bloodline as Kinsman-Redeemer) to redeem, "worthy;"
- be ABLE to redeem and
- be WILLING to redeem. Only Jesus could meet all THREE qualifications!

The **"Lion of the tribe of Judah"** is Jesus, the One who would come from Judah, the lion's cub (Gen. 49:9-10). *"You are a lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness--who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs [lit., "Shiloh"] and the obedience of the nations is his."* And yet Jesus appears as a Lamb with the marks of His suffering IN HEAVEN! Nail-scarred hand, wounded side and feet...

The elder informed John that He had **"triumphed,"** that is, had already achieved victory! (first aorist active indicative).

v. 6 Jesus is *"worthy"* by virtue of the sinless life He led, Law He kept and substitute He was willing to become: *"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* (Jn. 1:29). He's the Lion and the Lamb! **"Lamb"** is *arnion*, diminutive of *aren* -- an adult male lamb.

"Looking as if it had been slain" -- perfect passive participle... Jesus will forever bear those marks!

"Four living creatures" -- Greek: ζώον; *dzo'-on* angelic cherubim that surround the throne of God.

"Elders" -- *presbuteroi* (1 Tim. 5; Titus 1:5); equal to *episkopoi* in (Titus 1:7). Angels are NEVER called "elders." 24 = priesthood in 1 Chron. 24; 1 Peter 2:9 says we, the Church, are a "royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people called by God." 24 = OT/NT saints! 12 tribes; 12 apostles!

"Seven horns" -- the horn is an ancient Heb. symbol for strength (cf. Pss.); thus 7 horns would symbolize full, complete or perfect strength; omnipotence!

"Seven eyes" speaks of perfect and complete wisdom, omniscience (all-knowing) and insight. That's why James says, *"If any one lacks wisdom, he should ask God..."* (James 1:5).

"Which are the seven Spirits of God" -- or "seven-fold;" Isa. 11:2; cf. Zechariah 4:1-6 *"Then the angel who talked with me returned and wakened me, as a man is wakened from his sleep."*

2 He asked me, "What do you see?" I answered, "I see a solid gold lampstand with a bowl at the top and seven lights on it, with seven channels to the lights."

3 Also there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left."

4 I asked the angel who talked with me, "What are these, my lord?"

5 He answered, "Do you not know what these are?" "No, my lord," I replied.

6 So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty."

v. 8 **"Harp"** -- small, hand-held zither; 4-20 strings stretched over a sounding board.

"**Bowl**" is a broad, shallow dish; as the smoke of the incense arose before God, so the prayers of the saints arise before God and is accepted as a sweet smelling savor, pleasing to Him. Cf. altar of incense in Ex. 30:1; 40:5. PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER! (James 5:16).

v. 9 "**Purchased**" – Greek, *agorasas* (aorist tense) – lit., to purchase from the *agora*, the marketplace.

It has to be a new song; it's the first time the Lamb has taken the scroll! NOT a proof text for constantly needing NEW songs in P&W! Who is the only group of people who can say, "***you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation***"? Only the Church – which means the Church is in heaven before the judgments begin to fall in ch. 6!

v. 10 Cf. 1 Peter 2:9 "*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God...*"

****NOTICE** where it is we will reign!!! Not in Heaven! There's only One Ruler there! But on the EARTH during the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20).

v. 11 Lit., "*myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands*" – countless myriads in attendance, all terms in an attempt to describe an innumerable host in attendance!

v. 12 Seven (7) attributes listed. When does TRUE worship take place? When the P&W leader tells you to? When the music starts? No – it's when we SEE JESUS! And realize He died for ME!

v. 13 Someday, every knee will bow, in Heaven, on earth and under the earth (Phil 2). A typical NT phrase expressing the idea of universality; every creature; tantamount to saying, "all creation."

v. 14 "**4 living creatures**" are cherubim (cherubs); the 24 "**elders**" are representative of the 12 tribes of Israel (OT believers) and the 12 apostles (NT believers). Elders can't be angels as we see them on thrones, wearing victor's crowns.

"**Amen**" is "firm," or "trustworthy;" "so be it!" An exclamation of affirmation; "Yes, Lord!"

When does REAL worship take place? The moment you really see Jesus!

III. SUMMARY / APPLICATION / RESPONSE

1. Heaven is REAL!!!
2. All praise and worship on earth is dress rehearsal for Heaven! Practice OFTEN!
3. We can anticipate the glory and wonder of the heavenly scene . . . someday, WE'RE GONNA BE THERE!