

John has been caught up in the spirit into heaven and now he sees God sitting on His throne and holding a scroll containing the “things which must be hereafter.” After a search for someone worthy to open the scroll and break its seals, all of heaven and creation break into praise and worship as Christ steps forward to take the scroll and unleash its contents upon the world.

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<sup>1</sup> And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

**“And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book”** - The book was likely a scroll and the fact that God Himself was holding it indicates that He was the author. He was holding it in His right hand, the hand of power and strength. We see later that the book contains the judgments that God will pour out on the earth in His wrath, but at this point John likely sees this book as containing the “things which must be hereafter” which he was promised to be shown (Rev. 4:1).

**“written within and on the backside”** - Typically a scroll was written only on the inside where it could be conveniently read as it was unrolled. If the writing overflowed the size of the scroll then the backside could also be used. The fact that this scroll had writing on the front and back indicated that God had filled it to overflowing with the things which He has planned for the earth.

**“sealed with seven seals”** - Legal documents were typically sealed with melted wax in order to protect their contents from being read by those without sufficient authority. One commentator suggested that the scroll was the title-deed to the earth. In the Bible, seven is the number of completeness, so the seven seals on this scroll elevates the authority needed to read the document to someone with complete authority. Apparently the scroll was divided into seven sections, each containing divinely ordained events and protected by a seal.

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<sup>2</sup> And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

**“And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice”** - Apparently this angel was chosen because a loud voice was needed to be heard throughout heaven and perhaps all of creation as well (v. 3). We don’t know the identity of this angel but some have speculated that he might be the angel Gabriel, whose name means “strength of God.”

**“Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?”** - Who has the rank, authority, righteousness and holiness to be able to open the book and look upon the judgments and wrath on sin that God is about to unleash upon the earth? “Loosing the seals” is synonymous with releasing and setting into motion the events protected by each seal.

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<sup>3</sup> And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. <sup>4</sup> And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. <sup>5</sup> And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

**“And no man [no one] in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon”** - After the call for someone worthy to open the book goes out, “no man” (the Greek word means “no one”) is able to step forward and declare themselves worthy to open the book. The search included “heaven” (the abode of God), “the earth” (living people), and “under the earth” (dead people). No created being had the authority to reveal and unleash the judgments contained within the book.

**“And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon”** - Apparently John feared that the plans of God would be postponed. Knowing the evil that was in the world, he wanted to see God’s will done on earth.

**“And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David”** - One of the 24 elders calls to John to stop weeping for there was hope. He directs John’s attention to One that he describes as “the Lion of Juda” and “the Root of David.” In Gen. 49:9, while giving his blessing on each of his sons, Jacob describes his son Judah: “*Judah is a lion’s whelp...*” Here we see that Christ, Who came from the tribe of Judah, is the One Who caused Judah to be a lion’s whelp. The elder further identifies this Person as “the Root of David.” Christ indeed was of the royal line of David, but He is described here as the “root” of David. The elder points to Jesus Christ as the hope for He is our hope, our life, and our Savior.

**“hath prevailed [to conquer] to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof”** - No created being was worthy to open the book but Jesus Christ has conquered all hindrances and obstacles and has earned the right to open the book, break the seals, and reveal the judgments and the other “things which must be hereafter.”

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<sup>6</sup> And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. <sup>7</sup> And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

**“And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders”** - Apparently the term “throne” refers not only to the seat where God sits but also to the elevated platform on which the seat rests. This is where the four beasts have been standing, surrounded by the 24 elders. John looks to see this “Lion of Judah” and see Him in the middle of the throne among the four beasts and elders.

**“stood a Lamb as it had been slain”** - Likely John was expecting to see a lion, but instead he sees a “Lamb.” This Lamb had the appearance of having been slain, although he doesn’t get into the specifics of what this looked like. The image of Christ as a sacrificed lamb is an apt description of Him as the sacrifice for our sins. John the Baptist described Christ as such: “*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29b). Christ became the sacrifice for sins that was pointed to by OT sacrifices, particularly the lamb offered on the Day of Atonement.

**“having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth”** - In scripture horns speak of strength and power, while eyes speak of wisdom and knowledge. John also equates the eyes with the “seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.” The picture seems to be one of Christ’s complete omnipotence and omniscience for He has seven of each (seven being the number of completeness).

**“And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne”** - Christ alone was worthy in His authority, power, righteousness and holiness, and so He takes the book from His Father.

<sup>8</sup> And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. <sup>9</sup> And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; <sup>10</sup> And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

**“And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb”** - The four beasts and 24 elders immediately fall down and worship the Lamb when they see Him exercising His worthiness to do what only He was worthy to do.

**“having every one of them harps, and golden vials [broad shallow bowl] full of odours [incense], which are the prayers of saints”** - The underlying Greek seems to indicate that the “every one of them” refers to the 24 elders and not the four beasts. The beasts fall down in worship with the elders, but only the elders have the harps and golden vials. The harps were to be used in the worship of God and the “vial” (bowls of incense) carried the prayers of the saints before God. The 24 elders proclaim in song that they have been made kings and priests, so as priests, they bring the prayers of God’s people before Him.

**“And they sung a new song”** - The song was “new” in the sense that it was one that could not have been sung before redeemed human beings arrived in heaven. Since the song glorifies Christ for redemption through His blood, it is a song that angels cannot sing. Compare this to the new song sung by the 144,000 Jews saved during the tribulation: **Rev. 14:3** “*And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.*”

**“saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain”** - The reason, or perhaps more correctly the evidence, that Christ is worthy to take and unseal the book is because He is the Savior that was slain on the cross to bear our sins. The book contains judgments on the inhabitants of the earth who have rejected salvation through Jesus Christ and so He is justified to be the instrument of God’s wrath against them.

**“and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation”** - Christ was slain and His blood bought the redemption of all who believe. This line proves that the 24 elders represent redeemed human beings throughout the ages for they represent those that have been redeemed to God from every corner of the world.

**“And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth”** - Christ shows that He is worthy because of the grace He’s shown by redeeming sinful mankind and raising them up to kings and priests before God. Christ will delegate authority to the saints to rule and they will serve as priests between God and those living on the earth during the Millennium.

<sup>11</sup> And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; <sup>12</sup> Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

**“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders”** - John now hears the voices of many angels who were surrounding the throne of God, the beasts and the elders. These angels have been inspired by the new song of the elders and now join in praising God.

**“and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands”** - Easily millions of angels.

**“Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing”** - The angels cannot claim to be redeemed by the blood, but they can appreciate and praise the Lamb for being slain. They praise Him for 7 attributes that show His worthiness. Seven speaks of completeness in the Bible and so these 7 attributes represent His complete worthiness.

<sup>13</sup> 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, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. <sup>14</sup> And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

**“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, heard I”** - On top of the four beasts, the 24 elders and the millions upon millions of angels praising God, John now hears every creature in all of creation joining in on the praise.

**“saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever”** - The creatures give glory to both God the Father sitting on the throne and the Lamb. These appear to be the birds (“which is in heaven”), animals on the earth, animals that live underground, and sea creatures. Notice they do not praise God for redemption because only redeemed mankind is able to do that.

**“And the four beasts said, Amen”** - What more can be said? The four beasts can only declare their agreement to the glory given to God and can only say “Amen!”

**“And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever”** - The 24 elders respond to the overflowing abundance of praise by falling down and worshiping God once again.

What glorious worship and praise of our God that happens in heaven! John’s description ought to inspire us to give God similar praise and worship while here on earth for He is worthy!