

Revelation 5:1-4

Henry Morris, in agreement with many dispensational interpreters (e.g., Ironside, Criswell, Lindsey), wrote, "But what is this remarkable scroll? It is nothing less than the title deed to the earth itself." Walvoord notes, "Roman law required a will to be sealed seven times as illustrated in the wills left by Augustus and Vespasian for their successors." The mighty judgments of the Tribulation period that are unleashed by the opening of the document all are part of God's reclaiming for Himself the control of the earth, which was forfeited to Satan by the fall of Adam and Eve long ago. The "redemption of the purchased possession" (Eph. 1:14) is accompanied by long-overdue punishments upon the usurpers who have "destroyed the earth" (Rev. 11:18) and defied their Creator. Ryrie writes:

Actually, we are not told in this chapter what the book contained, but when the seals are broken in chapter 6 the judgments of God are poured out on the earth. When the seventh seal is opened, the trumpets sound (8:1) and when the seventh trumpet blows, Christ is said to receive the kingdoms of this world (11:15).

Under Jewish law, real estate that had been forfeited by a man could be redeemed (bought back) by any near kinsman (Lev. 25:25). To redeem the earth, forfeited by man, the redeemer must be a kinsman (hence a man, not an angel) and must come forward with the purchase price in hand—something that no one in the universe could do except Jesus (see 1 Pet. 1:18–19).

Revelation 5:5-6

The oft-repeated expression, **Behold!** (v. 5), is similar in meaning to our exclamation, "Surprise!" John had wept at the prospect of no one qualifying to open the scroll. The unexpected news that a lion-like Judean had qualified for the task changed his chagrin into hope. But this announcement was not the end of the surprises. John writes, "I looked—and surprise!" It was no lion at all, but a **Lamb** (v. 6) that had stepped forward. From the viewpoint of those in heaven, He is recognized as a conquering Lion, though to human eyes, Jesus seemed a mere lamb.

Ryrie thinks that the **seven eyes** (v. 6) "represent the fullness of the Spirit of God." Of the same, Walvoord writes, "This may be a reference to seven angels."

Revelation 5:7-10

The appearance of the Lamb to open the scroll marks the beginning of the end of the present age. With the breaking of each seal, His Second Coming is brought another step nearer. The mention of **the prayers of the saints** (v. 8) reminds us that for almost 2,000 years the church has been praying, in accordance with Christ's instructions, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The breaking of the seals paves the way for the fulfillment of this age-long desire of the saints to see the kingdom of God established.

The reign of the saints **on the earth** (v. 10)—as opposed to “in heaven”—is a reference to the millennial reign of the saints with Christ after He has returned to earth to establish His kingdom. Henry Morris writes: “Three times in the book of Revelation it is said that believers are to be made kings and priests (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). These functions apply particularly in the millennial kingdom, when there is still need for them.” According to dispensational expectations, many unsaved people will live on earth during the Millennium, and the saints will reign over these people from their headquarters in Jerusalem (cf. Luke 19:17).

Revelation 5:11-14

The “thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand” of **angels** (v. 11), who now join the song are not a literal number, but a way of saying “innumerable” angels. God’s faithful angels (in contrast to those that fell) are countless. This language recalls that of Daniel 7:10—“A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him.”

Those things attributed to Christ by the singing multitude speak not of His First Coming, which was in weakness and humiliation, but of His Second Coming, which is in **power ... and strength and honor and glory** (v. 12).

When we are told that **every creature** (v. 13) in heaven, earth, and the sea now sing of the glory of God, this “must refer,” writes Morris, “either to holy angels appointed to serve in these regions, or else to the animal creation—more likely the latter.” That the creation glorifies God is declared in Psalm 19 and again in Psalm 148:7–10: “Praise the Lord from the earth, You great sea creatures, ... beasts and all cattle; creeping things and flying fowl.” Morris qualifies this statement, as seems necessary, “with the implied exception, no doubt, of those evil ones from whom the world is to be redeemed.”²

² Gregg, S. (1997). *Revelation, four views: a parallel commentary* (p. 101). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers.