**Session 5**

***Workbook,* Week 3**

**Revelation 5**

**7-8 October 2024**

**The Sealed Scroll –** Anyone living in the Roman Empire of the first century A.D. would have immediately recognized this sealed scroll as **a last will and testament**. According to Roman law, a will had to be witnessed by seven people, who would each stamp it with his/her seal. The scroll would be opened upon the death of the one making the will, and all seven witnesses had to be present when it was opened. So the two big questions for the sealed scroll in Revelation 5 are: “Whose will is this? What does it say?” Remember that a will lists what is to be inherited—and that we will inherit everything that Christ will inherit from the Father! So whose inheritance is contained in this will? Ours!

**Three Important Categories –** We need to get some terminology straight, both for this passage and for the rest of the book. Revelation 5:3 talks about “those in *heaven*, on *earth*, and *under the earth*.” The Creation account in Genesis began with a mention of *heaven* and *earth* and *water*. The “water” was later revealed to be divided into two parts: the sea (salt water) and water under the earth (fresh water). We will see these three domains over and over as we continue on in our study of Revelation. [Note: To further verify that “under the earth” is a synonym for “waters” or the “sea”, we can turn to Exodus 20 and examine two of the ten commandments. Notice that the second commandment says, “Do not make an idol for yourself, whether in the shape of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below of in *the waters under the earth*.” The Sabbath command also declares that “the Lord made the heavens and the earth and the *sea*.”]

**Back to the Scroll –** So John wept bitterly because in all of creation, past and present, there was absolutely no one worthy to open the scroll—which meant that the inheritance would go forfeit! John felt grief and panic, both for himself and for all believers everywhere: “We *must* get this open! How can there be no one worthy to open it?!?” And then he is reassured by an angel, “Look! The Lion from the tribe of Judah…HAS conquered so that He is able to open the scroll.” Once again we are reminded that the book of Revelation is *not* about an epic battle between good and evil: the battle is already won. But what John sees is not a lion or a king, but a lamb that seems to have been slaughtered. The original audience would have immediately recognized this as Passover language. This is the Passover Lamb, slain as our substitute. When judgment comes and the angel of death descends upon the earth, he will *pass over* the children of God. Why? Because One like a slaughtered lamb has gone in their place. And note: a will is enacted upon the *death* of its author. In this heavenly vision, we see Christ, both already slain and already living again.

**Significance of the Lamb’s Symbolism –** The lamb of John’s vision is described as having “seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent into all the earth.” So let’s see if we can decipher the symbolism. *Horns* are always a symbol of *power*. *Seven* horns means He has all power, complete power, i.e. He is omnipotent. *Seven* *eyes* means that God is omniscient, He sees all things. And the *seven spirits* sent into all the earth remind us that God is omnipresent: His presence is everywhere in all the earth. So these three attributes of God are associated with Jesus Christ, reminding us that the “lamb slain” is part of the Godhead. **He needs to be recognized, not just as the man who lived and died and rose again, but as fully God.**

**Tabernacle Imagery –** The golden bowls filled with incense in Revelation 5:8 point us toward the golden altar of incense in the Holy Place in the Tabernacle. By now we have marked every item in the Tabernacle with its heavenly fulfillment…except one. **The bronze altar of sacrifice is never seen in Heaven because the Lamb has been slain and the final sacrifice has already been offered once and for all.**

**The New Song –** Just as God the Father was hailed as worthy because He created all things, Jesus Christ, the Passover Lamb, is hailed as worthy because He was slaughtered on our behalf. Because of what He did, we have been made a kingdom of priests, and we will reign on the earth, just as we were created to do. In this scene, the four living creatures and the 24 elders burst into song because Christ is worthy to open the scroll which contains our inheritance. What stood between the children of Israel and their inheritance in the Old Testament, i.e. what prevented them at first from gaining their inheritance in the land of Israel? Wicked people that God will judge. The opening of the scroll is not just so we can hear about all the pleasures of heaven that we will receive. It is also so that judgment will be poured out on those who have rejected God.

**Language of Fulfillment –** The song says that people from every 1tribe and 2language and 3people and 4nation have been purchased by God. This four-fold description is an indication that the gospel has gone out to the ends of the earth. Think of how expansive this is. We have gone from a promise given to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 about the blessing of the children of Israel to one that now fills the earth. In many ways, this is another “it is *finished!”* statement that we will see repeated in various ways throughout the rest of the book.

**Numbers Again –** This chapter ends with the voices of “many angels…countless thousands, plus thousands of thousands.” This is an imprecise number meant to convey *innumerability*. There are so many that you just can’t put a number to it!

**The Throne Room –** This is not the last time we will see this heavenly reality in Revelation. Chapters 4 and 5 contain the *longest* description of God’s throne room, but this is definitely not the only time that it will be revealed to God’s people, for their encouragement. But we need this scene at this point to prepare us for what is coming next. We need to remember that Someone is seated on the throne. When the world around us would say that “Caesar is lord”…or we are urged to place our hope in some earthly king…or the people of the world tell us that the values of this world system are the ones that should be written on our hearts…WE would say, “Not among the children of God!” We would remember this scene and say, “*Jesus* is Lord. He is even now seated at the right hand of God the Father.” And we will remember the promise of the rainbow and the significance of the jewels on the ephod and know that our great high priest, Jesus, has covered us with His precious blood and is remembering us before the throne of His Father. All glory and honor and blessing be His!