

**Revelation 5:1-14**  
**“Who is worthy to open the scroll?”**

**I. Intro**

**II. Vs. 1-7 The redeemer**

**III. Vs. 8-14 They sang a new song**

**I. Intro**

In chapter four John was taken through an open door into the presence of the Lord and witnessed the activity of worship in heaven. His attention is again brought to the throne of God only this time it is in what God is holding in His right hand which seems to be the reason for the worship.

**II. Vs. 1-7 The redeemer**

Vs. 1 Before we look at the scroll there is an important fact that John gives that often goes unmentioned:

- a. *“I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll”*: Whatever the contents or identification of this scroll **John sees that its possession is in the hand of power of God Almighty.** That means that **the battle as to whom it belongs has already been won.**

We know three things based upon this chapter as to what is in the scroll:

- a. There is **only One person worthy of open the scroll and loosening its seals.**
- b. The 24 elders who present our prayers sing a song in verses 9-10 in which the central theme is redemption. Based upon this it is safe to say that **this scroll has to do with redemption.**
- c. In chapter 6-7 we find out that each of the seals has to do with unleashing a judgement upon the earth. Based upon this it would appear that **the scroll has something to do with judgement as well.**

In the O.T. there were **three things that could be redeemed based upon the book of Ruth:**

- a. **A servant**: If a person sold him or herself into slavery to pay off a debt a close relative could purchase them out of it. What the kinsmen redeemer did was to allow the person to **regain their original “purpose”!**
- b. **A bride**: As in the book of Ruth a widowed woman could also be redeemed by a close relative of her deceased husband and become his bride. In this sense the kinsmen redeemer’s act allowed the woman **to regain her “position”!**
- c. **Land**: The one who sold or a close relative on their behalf could repurchase that which had been sold to pay off debts. This had to be accomplished after seven years, the year being called the year of jubilee, if it was not redeemed by the kinsmen redeemer at that time it would remain forever in the hands of the person who purchased it as collateral. As such the act of the kinsmen redeemer allowed the landowner to **regain his or her “place”!**

**In the case of land there would be two deeds drawn up:**

1. One would remain in the hands of the person who sold the land.
2. The other would be sealed and kept in a safe place.

On the year of jubilee both scrolls would be brought the opened; one proved whose land it had been originally, the sealed open revealed the terms and obligations involved in purchasing it back. **John sees that at mankind's fall in Genesis humanity lost three things:**

- a. We lost our **purpose** which was to serve the Lord, instead we served ourselves by the sweat of our brow.
- b. We lost our **position** which was intimate fellowship, as such we are often called the "bride" of Christ.
- c. We lost our **place** where we were to dwell in our purpose and position.

Jesus has already redeemed us back to our **original purpose** as well as our **original position** as His bride but **the place where we dwell is not yet been restored.**

Psalms 24:1 reminds us that in a technical sense "*The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein.*" The earth and all who dwell in it belong to the One who created it. In Gen. 1:28-29 God gave the dominion of the earth to man who at his fall relinquished it to Satan. It is for this reason that Jesus refers to Satan in John 12:30-31, 16:11 "*the god of this world*". In Matt. 4:8-9 at Jesus 3<sup>rd</sup> temptation at the hands of Satan he was tempted by being shown all the kingdoms of the world and their glory and told that they could all be His if Jesus would only bow down and worship him. **Jesus does not dispute Satan's ownership only the way in which to obtain it the world.** Satan knew that Jesus came "*to seek and to save that which was lost.*" (Luke 19:10) and at His death and resurrection He has redeemed us back, yet there is one yet unfinished work of redemption based upon scripture.

1. 1 John 5:19 "*the **whole world** lies under the sway of the wicked one.*"
2. Rom. 8:19-22 "*the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.*"
3. Eph. 1:13-14 "*the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.*"

What we have here is the title deed to the earth which Jesus is taking back after we subjected it to futility. Of further interest is that this "sealed scroll" has the terms and obligations in purchasing back the earth. Also notice that it has writing on the **inside** as well as on **the back** which suggests that **nothing can be taken away or added.**

Vs. 2-3 John hears and sees a mighty angel issuing a challenge to all in heaven on earth or under the earth. The first thing to notice is the **depth of the search:**

- a. "*no one in heaven*": In all of God's created universe even among the cherubim with Michael and Gabriel there was not one found that was both "able and worthy". Even in the dwelling place of God, John saw none.
- b. "*Or on the earth*": In the dwelling place of man throughout all of history there was not one man who was able to take the scroll from the hand of God. Not Enoch, Elijah or even Moses could do so.
- c. "*Or under the earth*": Those in Abraham's bosom David and all the prophets as well as others. None of them were even able to look at the scroll. Peter and the apostles were unable, no one!

The second thing I notice is the **uniqueness of the search** as it was for someone who had to fit two distinct things:

1. **Qualified**: Someone who was willing to do so “**able** to open the scroll, or to look at it.”
2. **Willing**: Someone who “is **worthy** to open the scroll and to lose its seals?”

**There may be someone who is qualified but unwilling and perhaps there might be someone who is willing but not qualified thus the search was for both.**

Vs. 4-5 No wonder John reacted the way he did with weeping much as the search was exhaustive and the thought of the earth forever remaining under the curse and control of satan is too much for him to bare. One of the elders suggests to John that there is One who is able and worthy to take the title deed to the earth. **I wonder if john realized that he was the only one perplexed at the lack of anyone coming forward to take the scroll?** John went from weeping uncontrollable to incredible joy instantly. The unidentified elder gives John the only One both able as well as worthy to open the scroll. **The surprise comes not at Jesus description or worthiness but rather at why John did not see as He was in the midst of the throne.**

- a. First, the elder’s description which has to do with his ability to be able to take the scroll and lose its seals. “Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to lose its seven seals.” This is the only place in this book where Jesus is described, and it is done to describe His uniqueness as seen in His dignity and sovereignty. He is the “**root of David**” so humanly speaking he is from royal roots but as Jesus spoke to the Pharisees in Matt. 22:41-46 David had his roots in Him as Jesus is both David’s son as well as His Lord. The elder describes Jesus as having “prevailed” or conquered as the Lion the King, Judah may have been the “lion’s whelp”, but Jesus is the Lion of Judah.
- b. Vs. 6 Here we are given the reason John didn’t see Jesus even though He was in the midst of the throne **as he was only considering Jesus’ worthiness but doing so apart from His willingness** as Jesus is the “Lamb as though it had been slain”.

Several things here that stand out:

- a. “In the midst of the throne”: Jesus is God as He is in the midst of the throne.
- b. “a Lamb as though it had been slain”: Here the emphasis is upon Jesus’ willingness to lay down His life to redeem us.
- c. Finally, John describes **Jesus as the Lamb of God in a threefold manor**:
  1. “Seven horns”: Horns in scripture are a symbol of power and seven in the number of perfections. John describes Jesus as the Lamb of God who though slain is none the less perfect in power or “omnipotent”!
  2. “Seven eyes”: Eyes in scripture are a symbol of wisdom and seven the number of perfections. John describes Jesus though the slain Lamb of God as all-knowing or “omniscience”!
  3. “Seven Spirits of God”: John describes Jesus the slain Lamb of God as he “seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth”. This describes being everywhere present and seven being the number of perfections speaks of the fact that Jesus is perfect in presence or “omnipresent”!

Vs. 7 It is this Jesus who is both able and willing who though being the Lamb of God slain is still God and as such is still all powerful, all knowing and everywhere at once. It is this Jesus who alone can take the scroll from the Fathers hand and lose its seals!

### **III. Vs. 8-14 They sang a new song**

Vs. 8 Here we are given the reaction to Jesus’ ability and willingness to take the scroll.

1. “*The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb*”: Lets agree here that they fall down NOT before an angel, prophet or good man but rather before ***the Son of God***.
2. Next we see their instruments of praise which are twofold:
  - a. “*a harp*”: Which is always ***a symbol of divine worship*** which is fitting as they are there to worship the divine one.
  - b. “*And golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints*”: The role of the elders or “saints” is not that of an intercessor but rather as a presenter of the prayers of the saints (you and I). It is Jesus we are told in Heb. 7:25 that “*lives to make intercession for them*.” David prayed in psalm 141:2 “*Let my prayer be set before You as incense*”, and here we see that they are. But just what are the prayer of the saints? Well in Matt. 6:10 Jesus taught the disciples the model prayer and concluded it with the words, “*Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*.” These bowls of prayer are filled with cry of all our hearts that God again would completely rule on the earth.

Vs. 9-10 This is a new song of the redeemed where Jesus is praised for being our redeemer as He alone satisfied the requirements taking upon Himself the penalty of our sins. Like at the scope of fruit that His work accomplished as the song sings that Jesus has, “*redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation*”. Jesus redemptive work crossed four barriers:

1. **Tribe**: Crossed every common ancestor
2. **Tongue**: Crossed every common language
3. **People**: Crossed every common race
4. **Nation**: Crossed every common rule or government

And it was this accomplished according to the song, “by His blood”, grace may be free, but it was not cheap. Notice what else His blood accomplished beyond our redemption it has, “*made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.*” **Jesus blood not only redeems us it transforms us from sinners to kings and priests.** That is what Paul tells the Ephesians in 2:3-6 “*we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus*”.

Vs. 11-12 Some 42 times the words “***Then I looked,***” appear in some form in this book. It is interesting that the angelic host proclaim but we the redeemed sing this particular song. There is only One in heaven that will be worthy to worship for redemption, Jesus! And the proclamation of a sevenfold blessing is here given to Him, “*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain*”:

1. “*To receive **power***”: In Matt. 28:18 we are told that in heaven all will yield to His authority.
2. “*And **riches***”: In 1 Chron 29:13-14 We are told that in heaven all will lay down their resources at His feet for He is the One that provided all.
3. “*And **wisdom***”: In 1 Cor. 1:30 We are told that in heaven all will yield their minds to Him who knows all things.
4. “*And **strength***”: In psalm 24:8 we are told that in heaven all will lay down our physical resources at His feet.
5. “*And **honor***”: In psalm 8:5 we are told in heaven no one will be honored but God
6. “*And **glory***”: In John 1:14 we are told in heaven will think of nothing but Him.

7. “*And **blessing***”: It is He who has so blessed us it is only fitting that in heaven we will be forever blessing Him.

Vs. 13-14 The worship of creation now joins in on this glorious benediction which concludes with the total agreement of the four living creations and the 24 elders.