

Notes on Revelation 5

Intro: The focus on chapter four was the throne and Him who sat on it. In that chapter we were able to see the majesty, glory, and authority of God as he rules from heaven. Now John's attention is focused on a book and the Lamb to whom the contents of the book is revealed. Keep in mind the introductory verse: "the revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave Him to show to his bond-servants the things that must shortly come to pass". The revelation concerns matters that had not yet been revealed by God, which only the Father knew and which only Jesus as the Lamb of God was worthy to know and reveal to his bond-servants.

The book

We are to envision a "scroll" or "roll". The vision is similar to Eze. 2:8ff. In that vision the scroll, written on front and back revealed judgements against wicked Israel. Its contents were said to be "lamentations, mourning and woe" (2:10). In a similar way this "book" reveals "woes" upon God's enemies (Cf. 8:13)

Robertson quotes an author named Charles: In Roman law wills were sealed with the seals of the seven witnesses to the will. This served two purposes: to validate the contents and to protect the information until the breaking of the seals. This picture may capitalize on that custom as well.

This scroll is sealed also with seven seals. Since only God knows the contents he has sealed it himself. He validates it as being his own seven times indicating that its contents are perfectly true.

Usually these were written on one side but this one is written on the inside and the back. Does this indicate fullness?

The contents of the book are protected by the seals. Its contents are known by the Father only. This seems to suggest that this is not the O.T. which had been already revealed to man nor the N.T. revelation of the O.T. mystery of salvation but something subsequent to the revelation of the gospel. It is something which is known only by God. What is it? The things that must shortly come to pass--things concerning the "mystery of God which he preached to his servants the prophets", the overthrow of God's enemies and the establishment of his kingdom as the only world kingdom on earth.

The prophets spoke of the coming King and his kingdom and that it would defeat all its enemies but they were not given specific information on when and how these things were to be fulfilled.

The apostles asked Jesus if the time had arrived for the fulfillment of the kingdom prophecies having to do with the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. Jesus answers: Ac. 1:7-8.

When Jesus described the destruction of Jerusalem he said concerning the "day and the hour" "no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone" (Mt. 24:36; Mk. 13:32).

The book then represents the purposes of God concerning the kingdom; and its overthrow of all kingdoms of men. It has to do with the "time and epochs" when God's kingdom

"would bring to an end all other kingdoms" as the prophets, like Daniel had prophesied, so that the "kingdom would be restored to Israel" (God's people). God's judgments against his enemies. It is the things that must shortly come to pass!

Thus, no one in heaven or earth was worthy to open the book or look into it! Its contents could only be known, revealed and executed by the one person God had chosen to serve as his King over His Kingdom and through whom these prophesies would be brought about, the Messiah. It would have to be the person who had qualified himself by fulfilling the O.T. prophesies concerning the Messiah.

The Lamb

There was but one would could reveal God's purposes for His kingdom. The king himself! Look at how he is described!

The Lion of the tribe of Judah

Gen. 49:8-12 Note carefully the prophesy concerning Judah. His tribe was to be the ruling tribe in Israel until the ruler came whose right it was to rule over God's kingdom.

Jesus was that King (Cf. Mt. 1:3; Lk. 3:33) He is called the Lion. This king of the beasts of the field symbolized strength and rule. Jesus like the lion has overcome the enemy Satan. (The aorist indicative indicate a point in time.) He has defeated both sin and death. He has overcome. He is worthy because he is the Messiah.

The root of David

Is. 11:1-16 The wonderful passage portrays the rule of the Messiah over his people, gathering them from afar, and the complete overthrow of his enemies. He is worthy to open the book because he is the Messiah.

The Lamb

As if slain, reminding us of his sacrificial death. Another fulfillment of prophecy (Is. 53:7-8) and proof of Messiahship.

Standing...Don't miss the implication. Ordinarily a slain lamb would be laying down! But not this one. He has risen!

Seven horns indicates the completeness of his power. The horn is a symbol of rule or a ruler (1 Sam. 2:10; 1 Kg. 22:1; Ps. 112:9; Dan. 7:7, 20). Seven indicating completeness.

Seven eyes are the seven Spirit sent out into the earth (Cf. Zech 3:9, 4:10). This suggest that Jesus possess the fulness of the Spirit and thus complete omniscience over the whole earth. This again was another Messianic prophecy (Is. 61:1-4)

The Lamb's Praise

By the twenty-four elders

The twenty-four elders fall before the Lamb. If they symbolize the redeemed, then their harps and bowls symbolize the praise of the redeemed.

Harp needed no explanation. It is the obvious symbol of praise. So much so that the word for playing a harp in the O.T. came to mean in N.T. time to "praise".

Bowls of incense symbolize prayers to Christ.

They sing a new song

It is new because it reflects the changed conditions based on Christ's death and his deliverance of his people (Cf. Is. 42:10; Ps. 33:3; 40:3)

He is praised because He is worthy. He is worthy because he was slain and in his death brought into existence a kingdom of priests to God. This kingdom, said the O.T. prophets, would bring to an end all other kingdoms. Thus, "they will reign upon the earth". Actually the tense is present active indicative, "they reign". Robertson suggest a futuristic use. It calls attention to the fact that though the kingdom exists, it has not yet reached the stage where its people could be said to reign in the fullest sense. Cf. Dan. 7:27

By all the hosts of heaven
The seven-fold blessing

By every created thing
The praise of the Father and Son is shared.
The scene is one of complete adoration and reverential praise.

The Message

The prophets spoke of the coming kingdom and its victory over all its enemies. But only God knew when and how these things would transpire. Thus, only the King could know them and make them known to his subjects. Jesus has proven himself to be that king by his fulfillment of the O.T. Messianic prophesies. He has made of us a kingdom and priests to His God. He now takes from God's hand the revelation of God's purposes concerning the overthrow of all his enemies and makes it known to His people. This is the revelation of things shortly to come to pass.