

Revelation 5:1-5

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/rev/rev-5/romans-51-5/>

The book with the seven scrolls is revealed, and no one but the Lamb is found worthy to open the seals and read what's inside.

At this point in John's vision, he has entered the throne room of God. Having just finished describing the visuals of the throne room and who is in it in Chapter 4, he now turns to the *book* in the *right hand of Him who sat on the throne* (v 1).

Some translations use the word "scroll" instead of *book*, as that is what it would have been during John's time. Scrolls were rolled shut and sealed with wax. John notes that this *book*, which is *written inside and on the back*, is *sealed up with seven seals* (v 1). The idea is that you would open one seal and read until you reach the next seal. Only those who are authorized to break the seal are allowed to read the scroll.

In this case, the person authorized to read the scroll is one who is *worthy*. A search ensues to find one who is *worthy to open the book* (v 2).

There is no one immediately available who has the authority to open the seals. And so, John observes a call for one with authority to break the seal and open the scroll:

a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?" And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it (vv 2-3).

The phrase *in heaven or on earth or under the earth* is all encompassing (v 3). There is a complete search made, and no one anywhere could *open the book*. The reason is implied—because no one is found who is *worthy*.

Struck by the weight of this statement that *no one was able to open the book*, John reports that he *began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it* (v 4). John is in the *throne* room of God, but he is still *weeping*. There will come a time where weeping ceases (Revelation 21:4). But that time has not yet arrived.

We are not told why the inability to open the seal to the book is traumatic for John. We can infer the reason by what is about to unfold; the opening of the seven seals will lead to the culmination of history and the creation of a new heaven and a new earth. The great desire for all things to be made right is apparently contained within this *book* or scroll. That is certainly a good reason for great sadness.

However, Jesus comes to the rescue. Now *one of the elders* tells John to *Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals* (v 5).

We saw in Revelation 3:21 that Jesus overcame. The Greek word translated “overcome” is “nikao.” This word appears seventeen times in Revelation. It is variously translated in Revelation as:

- “Overcome,” as here in Revelation 5:5 and in the seven letters to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3
- “Conquering” and “conquer” in Revelation 6:2
- “Victorious” in Revelation 15:2

The Greek word “nike” is from the goddess of victory. The idea is one of winning, conquering, defeating one’s enemy, and being victorious. Jesus had “nikao” by overcoming temptation, rejection, and death. He was a faithful witness (Revelation 1:5). Because He was a faithful witness, He was found to be *worthy*.

As Hebrews 2:5-10 explains, humanity was designed to have the “glory and honor” of reigning over the world in harmony with God, nature, and one another. But we fell into sin, and the world was broken. And yet, Jesus, for the “suffering of death” restored humanity’s right to reign (Hebrews 2:9). Therefore, He now is *worthy* to break the scrolls, and begin the sequence of events that will lead to the end of the age for this earth, and begin a new age with a new earth (2 Peter 3:12-13; Revelation 21:1).

The *Lion* is from the *tribe of Judah* and the *Root of David* (v 5). These both point to this *Lion* as being the king. We are in the throne room, and the throne room has a king. That king is Jesus, the Son of David who has the right to reign (Matthew 1:1). He is of the *tribe of Judah*, because David is from that tribe. We could therefore read the *Root of David* as describing the *tribe of Judah*, or as Jesus being the *Root of David*.

Both are apt descriptions. Judah is the *root of David* because David came from the tribe of Judah. But Jesus is the *Root of David* because He is the One who will reign forever, as God promised David (2 Samuel 7:13). It is from Jesus that the Davidic kingdom will have its basis, its *Root*.

The Lion is Jesus. Jesus is the Lion because He is the king. In the next section, a Lamb is also introduced (Revelation 5:6). The Lamb is also Jesus. He is the Lamb because He died for the sins of the world (John 3:16). The Lamb is the only one deemed *worthy to open the book and its seven seals* (v 5). He is worthy because He has *overcome*. He has “nikao.”

The Lamb has overcome the obstacles of the world (temptation, rejection, and death) and served faithfully, learning obedience even unto death on the cross (Philippians 2:8). He died for the sins of the world, fulfilling His Father’s will. Therefore, His name has been lifted above every name, and He is worthy (Philippians 2:9). Because He allowed Himself to be sacrificed for the sins of the world, He is the Lamb of God, He has *overcome*, and He is *worthy*.

Jesus overcame by being obedient to the Father’s will that He should take on the form of man and die on a cross. Because of his obedience, God raised Him from the dead and gave Him power that all might know the glory of God and overcome as Jesus overcame. If we overcome, Jesus has promised that we can share His reward (Revelation 3:21). But that is only possible because He is *worthy*.

Biblical Text

¹ I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. ² And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?” ³ And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. ⁴ Then I *began* to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; ⁵ and one of the elders said to me, “Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.”