

Revelation 5:6-10

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The Lamb who is worthy comes and takes the book and all in the throne room fall down and worship Him.

John is in the throne room and has just seen “in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals” (Revelation 5:1). In the last section we saw that Jesus is both the Lion as well as *the Lamb*. He is the Lion because He is the king. He is *the Lamb* because He submitted to be sacrificed for the sins of the world. Only *the Lamb* has been found worthy to open the seals and look into the book. And now that very *Lamb* is shown to John:

And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth (v 6).

In Revelation 1, we saw the seven stars and seven lampstands in the throne room, which were the seven angels and seven churches. Now we have the *seven horns and seven eyes* of the *Lamb*, which are the *seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth*. Earlier, the angels were being sent to the seven churches only, but now the *Spirits of God* are going *into all the earth*.

The number *seven* depicts completion in scripture, as in the creation being completed in seven days. So we might infer that *seven horns* stands for complete power, and *seven eyes* signifies total knowledge.

God is omniscient and omnipresent; His *Spirit* is everywhere and He knows everything. It is clear that the *Lamb* is also God.

Next, the *Lamb*:

came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints (vv 7-8).

The *twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb*, showing that the *Lamb* has authority over all of the *elders* (v 8). This is likely because *the Lamb* is Jesus, who is the One who overcame and was given the title of “Son” to rule over the earth (Hebrews 1:5, 8, 13). As the *Lamb*, He took away the sins of the world. As the “Son” He is the Lion of Judah who will reign over the earth.

This Son restored to humanity the ability to return to the “glory and honor” of having a place of authority to reign over the earth, as was intended in God’s creative design (Hebrews 2:5-10). The *Lamb*, who is the Son, will bring many believers with Him to be sons, to share the “glory and honor” of reigning.

These are those who have overcome, as He overcame (Revelation 3:21; Hebrews 2:9-10). The *twenty-four elders* might either represent or be the leaders of those believers who overcame as Jesus overcame, and lived as faithful witnesses who did not fear rejection, loss, or death from the world.

The number of the *twenty-four elders* is not explained. Jesus promised the disciples that they would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel in His coming kingdom (Matthew 19:28). It is possible that they are twelve of the *twenty-four*. Perhaps another twelve represent leading believers who were faithful witnesses from among the Gentile believers.

The imagery of what *each* of the *creatures* and *elders* are holding is depicted as a *harp* and *golden bowls full of incense* (v 8). This mention of the *harp* is one of four occurrences in Revelation and could be the source of the stereotype of angels in heaven playing harps. But these harps are held by the *four living creatures and the twenty-four elders*. However, there is no mindless floating observed, and the harps are not being played.

In Revelation 15:2, the word appears again in the phrase “harps of God” being held by those who were “victorious” (“nikaeo”). This infers that the harps are a reward God gives to overcomers. Perhaps, just as the elders who had overcome have crowns, indicating authority and worship by casting them before the throne, those with harps of God participate in a heavenly orchestra. The harps then appear to indicate a sort of privilege.

The *golden bowls* contain *the prayers of the saints* (v 8). Apparently, when believers pray they fill the *bowls* of the *creatures* and the *elders*. In the Psalms, David asks God, “May my prayer be counted as incense before You; The lifting up of my hands as the evening offering” (Psalm 141:2).

Today, when we hear the word *saints*, we might think about the canonical *saints*, believers of great note here on earth. But here *saints* translates the Greek word “hagios” which is most often translated “holy” or “set apart.” Paul uses the word to refer to all the believers in Rome (Romans 1:7) which indicates that the designation “holy” can apply to any believer who is made holy by being in Christ through faith (2 Corinthians 5:17).

This designation of *saints* could also apply to those believers who by conduct of their lives have lived set apart from the world, living in obedience as faithful witnesses and have, therefore, had their prayers given special consideration (James 5:16). It is inferred here that the prayers of these *saints* are like incense that fill the *golden bowls* in the throne room and are a sweet and fragrant offering to God.

We will see in a later chapter that bowls full of the wrath of God are poured out upon the earth to bring judgment to unrighteousness. These bowls are provided by the four creatures (Revelation 15:7). It could be that the *prayers of the saints* include prayers for the restoration of the earth, for justice to come to the earth—that the wrath of God upon unrighteousness is connected to these prayers.

Having fallen down before the *Lamb*, the *creatures* and *elders* now begin to sing a *new song*:

“Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth” (vv 9-10).

This *new song* is sung to Jesus, *the Lamb*, proclaiming the ways in which He is *worthy* to *break the seals* of the *book*. Perhaps the song is accompanied by the harps. The song celebrates that the Lamb is *worthy*. This appears to be like the theme song at the end of a film rising to a crescendo as the story’s protagonist achieves victory.

John was distraught earlier when no one was found to break the seals and open the book, which will lead to the culmination of all history, and the restoration of all things to God’s creative order. Now there is great celebration, because the Lamb is worthy to open the scroll, and restore all things. The Lamb is the one whose sacrifice of Himself *purchased for God with His blood men from every nation on earth* (v 9).

We will see in the next section that the Lamb is worthy to “receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing” (Revelation 15:12). Part of restoring all things is to reinstate authority in its proper place. God originally designed humans to reign over the earth (Hebrews 2:5-8). Humans fell, and did not properly govern the earth (Hebrews 2:8). But Jesus restored the right of humans to have the “glory and honor” to reign through His “suffering of death”—that is through Him being the Lamb of God sacrificed for the sins of the world (Hebrews 2:9).

Jesus is worthy of all the glory and honor to take all authority because He was *slain*. He has *purchased for God with His blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation* (v 9). Jesus was *slain* as the Lamb of God, to take away the sins of the world. This is the gospel in a nutshell, that Jesus died to restore humanity to God and to redeem the world (John 3:14-16; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

Jesus died and paid with His blood for our purchase of redemption. And not just the purchase of some people, but for all people: every sin was nailed to the cross and was paid for by Jesus (Colossians 2:14). And why has He purchased us? So that we will be *a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth* (v 10).

Those believers who overcome will gain the incredible reward of reigning with Christ and sharing His authority over the earth. Jesus was given all authority because of His obedience (Matthew 28:18; Philippians 2:8-10). He has not yet fully asserted His authority. The “Great Commission” implies that He is waiting for the fullness of those who overcome as He overcame prior to installing His *reign upon the earth*, as it begins with an assertion that Jesus already has all authority (Matthew 28:18). However, rather than assert that authority to reign, Jesus left instructions for His disciples to take the gospel everywhere they went, making disciples (Matthew 28:18-20).

In Romans, the Apostle Paul infers that the end of this age of the earth is awaiting the “fullness of the Gentiles” to be completed prior to physically installing His kingdom (Romans 11:25). It seems that when the number of overcomers is completed, Jesus will install His kingdom upon the

earth. When He installs His kingdom, He will fulfill His promise to His servants who have overcome as He overcame and share His reign with them (Revelation 3:21). They will be a *kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth* (v 10).

The nation of Israel was appointed to have a function to be a kingdom of priests, showing God's righteousness to other nations, and being a light to the world (Exodus 19:6). This was their charge, and the blessings of God's covenant/treaty with Israel was tied to whether they faithfully carried out that assignment. In like manner, Revelation promises great blessings to God's servants who hear the words of this prophecy and are faithful witnesses, and who are not deterred by rejection, loss, or even death from the world (Revelation 1:3).

This section shows the beginning of the culmination of this age. The culmination will focus on Jesus, who is on the throne of heaven, ascending to the throne of the earth, because He is *worthy*. When He does ascend to His earthly throne, He will bring with Him *from every tribe and tongue and people and nation* to reign with Him. These will be the overcomers, those who are faithful witnesses. They will receive the great blessing, because they did the things written in this prophecy (Revelation 1:3).

Biblical Text

⁶ And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. ⁷ And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. ⁸ When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. ¹⁰ "You have made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."