

## Revelation Chapter 5 The Hero

*In literature both ancient and modern, there has always been the image of the hero. The hero is the one who is willing and able to accomplish what appears to be an impossible task. Here the task is to open the scroll in order that God's future might play itself out...that justice and righteousness would triumph over the forces of Satan. As in most hero quest stories there is no one among the ordinary...and not so ordinary who can do this. Yet in the moment of despair there steps forward one who has already proved he is able and now accepts the challenge which only he can fulfill. And as with all conquering heroes the people will praise him. This is the pattern for conquering Roman heroes who return home to great acclamation. Since this is the real throne room then this must be the real hero...as opposed to those counterfeit heroes of the Roman Empire.*

1 Then I saw in the right hand of the one seated on the throne a scroll written on the inside and on the back, sealed a with seven seals; 2 and I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" 3 And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it.

*I saw in the right hand...a scroll - the fact it is in the right hand indicates it is of great importance. There are two different takes on the scroll. 1) God's eternal plan for all creatures for all of time 2) God's plan for the end times only.*

*Seven seals - In the Roman world seven persons witnessed to a will and each person attached his seal to the document. The seals show the secrecy of the document.*

*Who is worthy - the scene is set. This heightens the tension and makes it clear that only the lamb, Jesus himself has the power to work with God to unfold the events which will bring about God's final victory.*

*No one was able - Notice carefully that no angel or demon or human has the power to open the scroll. It sounds as if some have tried, but the real hero has not yet been found...sort of the Gordian knot idea...or in Homer the one who can shoot the arrows and win the hand Odysseus' wife. Also this means we are not able to save ourselves.*

4 And I began to weep bitterly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. 5 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

*Weep bitterly - to not be able to open the scrolls meant that God's people would continue to suffer because the future could not be unfurled. It would be reason to weep The Lion...Root of David - Genesis 49:8-10 "Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you. 9 Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He crouches down, he stretches out like a lion, like a lioness--who dares rouse him up? 10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and the obedience of the peoples is his." From this you begin to get the sense that if there is to be a hero in this story it ought to be someone whose lineage is such that they have been declared to be a hero. Judah is the line of*

*kings and David is the greatest king. So the words give the lamb the required heritage to be a hero.*

*Has conquered – Jesus has already demonstrated his hero status. He was willing to do whatever it took to insure that victory of God.*

*Can open – Jesus is the one who inherits and so can open.*

6 Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7 He went and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne.

*Between the throne and the four living creatures – you have the lamb already taking a central place in the “geography” of the throne room. The lamb is not an outsider but one who already has a central place in the salvation story.*

*As if it had been slaughtered – this refers to having its throat cut. This is a familiar image, but one that takes the story to a new place. What does it mean to look as if slain? Obviously if a lamb is slain it does not live...and would certainly not be living in the presence of God. This is a clear reference to Jesus, both John and Peter refer to Jesus being the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36, 1 Pet 1:19), 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29). Paul call Jesus our Passover lamb who has been sacrificed (1 Cor 5:7).*

*Having seven horns and seven eyes – this lamb is different... seven is the number of completion. It has complete power (horns) and complete sight (eyes). This lamb has been given the power and sight beyond all others. This can be seen when the seven eyes are referred to as the seven spirits sent out (the Lamb has the knowledge of all that is taking place. Nothing is hidden from the perfect spirit)*

8 When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 They sing a new song:

“You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals,  
for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God  
saints from every tribe and language and people and nation;  
10 you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God,  
and they will reign on earth.”

*Fell – this is the proper worship for one who has all power and glory. This is the same worship that is given to God himself.*

*Four living creatures and twenty-four elders – this is just the beginning of the praise, notice how the praise builds*

*Prayers of the saints – now humanity is brought back into the picture. This event is not separated from the “real” world. The elders who are near the lamb have heard the cries of God’s people and are offering them to the lamb, who has seen their plight.*

*Sing – again the great heritage of praise from Judaism.*

*For you were slaughtered – the hero lamb is now a counterintuitive hero. Most heroes become such because they are the slayers (look at Odysseus). Suddenly here we have John reinterpreting how the power of God has been at work in the world.*

***By your blood ransomed – again a reference to the day of Passover, only on a grander scale. Anyone on the earth can take hold of the power of the blood. This is central theme for John. The work of the lamb is not restricted by race, nationality or language. It has become a universal message.***

***Kingdom and priests – this again returns us to the central theme of God’s plan that God is about creating an alternative kingdom...not through war, but through sacrifice. This kingdom is real because it has a ruler (the lamb) and a set of rules (sacrifice).***

***Priests – all of those who are saved by the blood are called to serve the lamb. There is not elevated priesthood that controls access to God. All are called to act.***

***Reign – this is foreshadowing. God is going to take on the Romans and all else through His power and create a new and wonderful world in which the righteous will lie and reign. Rome may think it will last forever but God has other ideas.***

11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, 12 singing with full voice,

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”

***The voice of many angels – there is a single voice proclaiming praise for the lamb.***

***Thousands and thousands – this is the expanding nature of the praise. We have the four living creatures in circle one, then the elders in circle two, then the angels in circle three. No Caesar could ever expect this kind of praise.***

***Power, wealth... – this is a list of seven attributes. The lamb is worthy to receive all perfection. The lamb is worthy to receive all that God on the throne has to give.***

13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing,

“To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”

14 And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the elders fell down and worshiped.

***Every creature – suddenly the circles of praise are now complete. The final outer circle is the voice of every creature...not merely all people or even angels... it includes all the animals and even those who are in the darkness of death (under the earth). Caesar might be a mighty man but he cannot call for the praise of all creatures.***

***To the one on the throne and to the Lamb – we have praise now to the co-creators (John 1:1-4 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of all people.”) This is in a sense that the sheep know the voice of their shepherd.***

***Amen – the four living creatures agree that this praise is right and good.***

*Elders fell down and worshipped - again this is the only proper praise that is due to the one who will set humanity free because he has done what the one on the throne asked.*