



International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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Revelation 5:1-14 **English Standard Version** **April 29, 2018**

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, April 29, 2018**, is from **Revelation 5:1-14**. (Some will only study **Revelation 5:6-14**) **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

(Revelation 5:1) Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

God the Father is seated on and ruling from His throne in heaven, and the "right hand of God" is sometimes interpreted as "the power of God." No one has power greater than God, so no one can snatch the scroll from His hand. The words on the scroll are the words of God. The

scroll is filled with writing on the front and the back. The number seven represents perfection; therefore, the scroll is perfectly sealed, so no one can add any more words to the words of God or erase any words from the scroll.

Furthermore, God's words are perfect and will be perfectly preserved forever. Ancient scrolls or letters were sometimes sealed with melted wax upon which a signet ring impression was made. Kings often sealed official documents, decrees, and letters using their royal signet ring and sealing wax or sealing clay. The seal identified the sender and no one but the recipient was authorized to open the sealed scroll (of course anyone could illegally break a wax seal). God has the power over this scroll in heaven, so only the authorized recipient can break the seals and open the scroll after God gives them the scroll.

(Revelation 5:2) And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?"

We do not know all about the scroll. Some have suggested that the scroll is the deed to the earth or universe. It may contain the complete record or blueprint of God's plans and prophecies before He created the universe, including God's plans for the Messiah's redeeming work. It may be a prophecy about the future and the secret details about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ when God's enemies will be placed as a footstool under His feet. It may also include the names of all the saints, of all who will come to saving faith in Jesus Christ and rule with Him. We learn from the

angel's question that a person must be worthy to open the scroll by breaking its seals to discover or reveal what is written on the scroll.

(Revelation 5:3) And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it,

Among all those John saw everywhere around him at that time, no one was worthy to open the scroll or read it. No created being anywhere had the power or the right to open the seal. As noted, no one was able to open the scroll other than someone approved by God, because the scroll was firmly held by God. No one in created existence has the power to take the scroll from God and open it without God's permission, for the true God is the Almighty God. No mere human being is qualified or worthy to open the scroll because "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). No one on earth or under the earth was morally or spiritually qualified to look into the scroll.

(Revelation 5:4) and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.

John began to weep bitterly, not only because no one was found worthy to open the scroll but because sin had entered the world; because of sins committed against God, no one was worthy or able in heaven (forgiven sinners; such as Abraham, Moses, David, and Elijah), or on earth (all have sinned) or under the earth (unrepentant sinners)

to look into the scroll. The holy angels in heaven have never sinned, but their holy lives and good deeds as created beings did not make them worthy.

(Revelation 5:5) And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”

When one of the elders speaks to John, he shows him Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, and says Jesus is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals. Since Jesus is the Messiah and the One who fulfilled and will fulfill all the Old Testament prophecies, the elder describes Jesus as the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the promised descendant of King David. Since Jesus the Messiah existed before King David and David called Him his Lord, Jesus is the Root of David. King David grew to be the King of Israel and he was nourished by his Lord, Jesus, as a mighty tree is made strong from the roots up. Jesus conquered the devil, temptation (Jesus never sinned), and death (Jesus rose from the tomb). So, Jesus was worthy to open the scroll by virtue of Who He is and what He has done as Lord and Savior. He died sacrificially to save sinners and He rose from the dead and He is seated at the right hand of God. John heard the angel call Jesus, “the Lion of the tribe of Judah,” but when he looked he saw something different from what he expected.

(Revelation 5:6) And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

See the *International Bible Lesson Commentary* on Revelation chapter 4 to learn more about the creatures and the elders in this verse. When John saw that Jesus was standing, he described who he saw as a Lamb that had been slaughtered, but who was now obviously alive in heaven. The Lamb had been slaughtered as the sacrificial Lamb so God in love could justly and mercifully forgive repentant sinners, and God had raised Him from the dead to reign at His side. Jesus conquered by His sacrificial death, and He will conquer all evil and destructive forces when He comes again (as the Book of Revelation describes). The seven horns and seven eyes describe Jesus as the perfect, all-powerful, and all-seeing God, the Son of God, whose Father sits on His throne with the scroll. These horns and eyes also represent the seven spirits, which indicate that Jesus is everywhere present as the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are everywhere present together. Paul wrote about Jesus Christ spiritually indwelling believers: “To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is *Christ in you, the hope of glory*” (Colossians 1:27). Jesus’ resurrected and glorified human body has ascended into heaven, and spiritually, as the Son of God, Jesus is present

everywhere and especially within every true Christian. The Holy Spirit had already been given to Jesus' followers, and He had already been "sent out into all the earth." Since the Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity, John also saw the Holy Spirit "the seven spirits" (the perfect Spirit) present in heaven when Jesus took the scroll that was still sealed. Though John did not physically describe God the Father, he did use physical, but symbolic, language to describe God the Son and the Holy Spirit. No one should try to make images from his descriptions.

(Revelation 5:7) And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.

Jesus proved that He was worthy when He took the scroll from the right hand of His Father because His Father gave it to Him. Jesus had completed His work of redemption, but not everyone would come to faith in Him and the rebellion of some sinners would continue on earth. Jesus had additional work to do before God could bring peace throughout the universe, and that additional work included taking the sealed scroll from His Father in heaven and coming again to earth.

(Revelation 5:8) And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

John's vision in heaven proved that Jesus Christ deserves praise and is worthy to be worshiped, and since only God is worthy to be worshiped, we know the Bible declares Jesus is God, the Son of God, the "I Am." God's people should only pray to God as God has revealed himself in the Bible. The prayers of the saints (that is, all who trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior) are precious to God and all the holy ones in heaven. Both the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ also intercede for the saints (see Romans 8:27 & Romans 8:34). The scroll is of vital importance to the saints because the prayers of the saints are mentioned here as being held (symbolically in golden bowls full of incense) by the creatures and the elders who fall down before Jesus and praise Him when He takes the scroll from His Father. It seems they are offering the prayers of the saints to Jesus at this time too. No matter how feeble our prayers might be, they are precious to God as golden bowls of incense, and they are offered up to Him as of great value by the most important created beings in heaven.

(Revelation 5:9) And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,

Revelation chapter 4 includes a hymn by the creatures and the elders, and in chapter 5 they sing a new song. See the *International Bible Lesson Commentary* on Revelation chapter 4 to learn more about the other hymn. In this new

hymn, they declare Jesus worthy to open the seals on the scroll because of what He has done and the Father approved all He did. He is the perfect and only acceptable sacrifice to God for the redemption of sinners, who become saints (holy ones set apart or consecrated by God) because of Jesus' work. People are made saints by the work of Jesus, not by their works for Jesus (though all saints do good works and bear good fruit for Jesus). Jesus' death has made forgiveness and eternal life possible for saints from everywhere around the world; not just Jews, but people from every tribe, language, and nation.

(Revelation 5:10) and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

Jesus Christ has made all the saints of God (all true believers and followers of Jesus— not just a special group selected by church leaders) into a kingdom where He rules in their hearts as their King. The Kingdom of Jesus is “not of this world” (John 18:36). The saints serve as priests who will serve God and others by praying and leading people to know God the Father and the Lamb of God according to the Scriptures. In the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus' kingdom of priests reign over the entire earth in some sense now and will fully and visibly reign after Jesus comes again.

(Revelation 5:11) Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the

elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands,

The angels of God are so numerous that they cannot be counted by any finite human being. All rational beings in heaven offer praise to God. As God deserves, the Lamb of God also deserves and receives the praise of all of God's creatures in heaven; therefore, it is entirely appropriate for all of God's people on earth to worship Jesus the Messiah and give Him the glory and honor reserved for God alone.

(Revelation 5:12) saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”

All of God's creatures in heaven extol Jesus with their whole being, singing praises to Him with all their might. The resurrection of Jesus continues to be emphasized by indicating that He was slaughtered (not gently executed or crucified with compassion) and is now alive and receives seven aspects of perfect praise from the entire heavenly host. In this sevenfold praise, we acknowledge that Jesus is worthy to receive the best we have to give Him in power and wealth. He is worthy to receive our wisdom or the best thinking and use of our minds for Him and His kingdom as we reign as saints. God is the ultimate source of our power, might, and wealth, and we should use these gifts wisely to achieve His purposes for His world and us. Jesus deserves all the honor, glory, and blessing for everything

we ever achieve or acquire in this life.

(Revelation 5:13) And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”

Someday all creatures of our God and King will bow and declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, even those whose hearts and minds remain in rebellion against God and refuse to receive His saving grace. God the Father and God the Son deserve and receive equal praise, glory, and honor from believers and they will do so forever and ever. Christians try to describe the nature and relationship of God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit as One God in Three Person, the Trinity.

(Revelation 5:14) And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

The four living creatures affirmed the praise God the Father and Jesus the Lamb received from all God’s creatures. The elders worshiped the Father and the Son with heaven’s approval; therefore, it is appropriate and right for all true believers to worship God the Father and His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, Who was slaughtered for us that we might receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit and eternal life. Knowing these truths from the Bible, how can we do anything except what these elders and these four

living creatures (seraphs) have done but praise God our Father and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, with the love, strength, and wisdom that the Holy Spirit gives us.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What do you think was written on the scroll in God the Father's hand (may be several good answers)?
2. Give a reason why you think John wept bitterly (may be more than 1 reason)?
3. Describe what John saw when he first looked at Jesus? What do you think it meant?
4. How important to God are the prayers of true Christians; people John called "saints"?
5. Who did Jesus die for and ransom by His blood? What will He make of them?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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