

Heaven: The Throne Room of the Universe

The Context God Gives For the Tribulation

Revelation 5:9

For several weeks we have been looking at the elements of worship that are so incredibly displayed in Heaven around the Throne of God. As we have examined each element there has been in the background a scroll.

As we open to Revelation 5 this morning, we have come to the merging of two themes in Scripture that often do not go together in our minds. I am talking about our worship of our Redeemer being portrayed in the very same verse as the judgments of God's wrath being poured out upon the Earth.

Watch with me as we read v.9 and see:

The Context God Gives For the Tribulation

Please stand as we read and hear God speak through His Word:

*Revelation 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying: "**You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals;** For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,*

Pray

The context of all the tribulation and judgment of Revelation 6-20 is the worship around the Throne of Revelation 4-5. That is what is amazing. All the destruction ravaged scenes on earth during all those chapters are punctuated with the serenity of the songs around the Throne. What a picture of the security and peace that God alone can offer through any storm.

Now scan with me this chapter and note the big picture. Chapter 5 opens with God the Father on the Throne. In His Right Hand is a seven-sealed scroll. Of all the chapters in the Bible this is the one with the most references to this scroll. Look at v. 1-9, and note that there are 8 mentions of this scroll.

The word scroll is the Greek word **biblion**, from which we get book. But in this time period as John writes, a book is what we now call a scroll. Books as we know them as flat, square pages, bound together were called a codex. So what God is holding is what

we would call a scroll.

The Scroll Contains the Plan of God for Earth's Future

Most likely this scroll is the same scroll we see in Ezekiel 2:9-10 and Daniel 12:4. It refers to the plan of God to take back the kingdom of the Earth, temporarily taken over by Satan. Some call this scroll the title deed, but it has so much more to do with the actual plan of action to judge sin and end the rebellion.

As we watch the scene of worship in Heaven, we have been studying the element of redemption. As we are hearing songs of worship that we will offer in the future, we are seeing the wonders of the beauty God has surrounded Himself with in Heaven.

Now skip down and look at the opening of chapter 6. This scroll has seven seals. When we see that scroll opened in chapter 6 it is representing the unfolding of the plan for God's wrath to start pouring out in three parts: through the seven seals (Rev. 6-8), then the seven trumpets (Rev. 8-14), and finally the seven bowls (Rev. 15-19).

First, as each seal is loosed by Christ, the Lamb, the plan explodes into action. In chapter 6 there are six seals opened, and in chapter 8:1 the seventh seal opens to launch seven trumpets.

Second, the seven trumpets which cover chapters 8-14, where the seventh trumpet sounds in 11:15 it is the prelude to the final set of judgments known as the bowl judgments.

Finally, the bowls of wrath get poured out starting in Rev. 15:7 as they are introduced, and these seven bowls initiate the final events before Christ's Second Coming in power and glory in chapter 19, and His final acts consuming all the rebels in chapter 20.

But this sequence of seals, trumpets, and bowls always makes me wonder. How can Revelation swing from Heaven and worship to Earth and horribly destructive judgment? We can see the answer by understanding the explanations God has given. First, we can see twice mentioned collected prayers of the saints. See them mentioned in Rev. 5:8 and again in 8:3? Revelation is showing us God as he finally launches:

The Answer to Centuries of Prayers

For twenty centuries God's servants have prayed obediently: "Thy Kingdom Come". Now, all of those prayers, collected by God, in bowls at His feet, in v. 8 are scooped up and the wrath begins.

But the mystery has always been: why does God wait? One of the greatest expositors of

the last century was W.A. Criswell who pastored First Baptist of Dallas for almost 50 years, preaching 4,000 sermons. Here are his words, on this moment of God's wrath sent forth:

The mystery of God is the long delay of our Lord in taking the kingdom unto Himself and in establishing righteousness in the earth. The mystery of God is seen in these thousands of years in which sin and death run riot.

The pages of history, from the time of the first murder until this present hour, are written in blood, tears and death. The mystery is the delay of God in taking, the kingdom unto Himself. That is the most inexplicable mystery that mind could dream of, the mystery of the presence of evil.

For these thousands of years, God has allowed Satan to wrap his vicious, slimy, filthy, cruel tentacles around human life and around this earth. Does God know it? Is He indifferent to it? Is He not able to cope with it? Oh, the mystery of the delay of God! That mystery has brought more stumbling to the faith of God's people than any other experience in all life.

The infidel, the atheist, the agnostic and the unbeliever laugh and mock us, and God lets them mock and laugh. The enemies of righteousness and the enemies of all that we hold dear rise and increase in power and spread blood and darkness over the face of the earth, and we wonder where God is. Our missionaries are slain, our churches are burned to the ground, people in this earth by uncounted millions and millions are oppressed, living in despair, and God just looks. He seemingly does not intervene; He does not say anything, and He does not move. Sin just develops. It goes on and on.

Oh, the mystery of the delay of the Lord God! But somewhere beyond the starry sky there stands a herald angel with a trumpet in his hand, and by the decree of the Lord God Almighty, there is a day, there is an hour, there is a moment, there is an elected time when the angel shall sound and the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ."¹

What Revelation illustrates is what the rest of the Scriptures have already shown us.

Christ's Three Roles are Always Visible in the Word

Jesus has three very special roles given to Him as God the Son, by God the Father. Paul uses a message in Athens at Mars Hill, to explain them to us.

Turn with me to Acts 17 and see how Paul uses these three roles of Jesus Christ to present the Gospel to pagans with no understanding of the Scriptures. This is a

¹W. A. Criswell, *Expository Sermons on Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961-66), p. 190.

fascinating sermon Paul preached. Start with me in Acts 17:22-31

Listen as Acts 17 reminds us of the three roles Jesus Christ fills. Here in Revelation we see all three of them side-by-side. Always remember that:

Jesus is Always: Creator, Savior and the Judge

He is Creator (v. 24-26).

He is Savior (v. 27-30).

He is Judge (v. 31).

When mankind refuses to acknowledge their Creator, and when they refuse their only Savior, Jesus then becomes Judge.

Now back to Revelation 5. The context of the judgments of sinful and rebellious humanity is the worship of Heaven. But look where we started in Rev. 5:9. The theme of that worship in Heaven is what? Our wonderful Redeemers who purchased our redemption. And, God's Word explains to us:

Redemption's Three Purposes

The word redeemed in Rev. 5:9 is just one of three words² in the New Testament that are translated "redeem". Each of these three words that God chose to use tell us one facet of the triumph of the Cross, forever the theme of our songs in Heaven. Each word that God chose to express the work of Christ on the Cross speaks of His power to redeem us. Take a moment to ponder each of these truths.

The first word that is used in the New Testament to describe redemption is the one used right here in Rev. 5:9. It is *agorazō* (ἀγοράζω), which means: "to buy a slave in the market place"³.

- Revelation 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have **redeemed us to God** by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

The depth of meaning for this word comes as God explains what His redemption accomplished. We are redeemed/bought for God. God bought each of us for Himself. Wow. Let that settle in, and permeate your life.

I am owned by God. God went to the slave market of sin, and reached down and chose

² Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English reader* (Romans 3:24; Titus 2:11). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, in loc, electronic edition.

³ This word is found six times in Revelation (3:18; 5:9; 13:7; 14:3-4; and 18:11).

me, paid the redemption price with the blood of His own Son, and now owns me. Turn back to the second place God explains this special word.

- 1 Corinthians 6:20 For you were **bought** at a price; therefore **glorify God** in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Lesson # 1: Redemption Means Bought to Be God's Servants That Glorify Him

Christ bought us in this slave market of sin by His own blood; we as believers are His bondslaves. The slave market is this earth. All the unsaved are slaves of sin and Satan.

Our Lord paid the penalty for sin at the Cross. Those who trust in His blood, belong to Him as His bondslaves. The song of Heaven that should reverberate through our lives each day is that we were bought to glorify God.

Invite God's rule over every part of your life today as we stand and pray those wonderful words of reminder back to our Redeemer!