**1**[John the Apostle writes]Then I saw **in the right hand of him** who sat on the throne a **scroll with writing on both sides** and sealed with **seven seals**. **2**And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “**Who is worthy** to break the seals and open the scroll?” **3**But **no one** in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. **4**I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. **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 triumphed**. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.”

***(1) In his right hand.*** *See extra handout.* ***“Scrolls”*** *most often contained sacred writings and were used in worship settings (Luke 4:16-21); the* ***“writing on both sides”*** *suggests a book-like codex, but as the minds of John’s readers would have associated “sacred” with “scroll” rather than “codex”, this is probably a better translation of the Greek word* **βιβλίον***. The* ***seven seals*** *will be unsealed in chapters 6 & 7; for now, note that a person’s last will and testament was sealed with seven seals in Roman civil law. (Brighton, p. 134)*

***(2-3) “Who is worthy?” . . . No one*** *in all creation was worthy to lay claim to the will and testament of God.* ***No one controls human destiny or history except Jesus!***

*(Brighton, p. 146) “Jesus controls it for the purpose of strengthening the saints, of aiding his church to carry out her mission on earth, and of judging the powers and persons of wickedness and evil.”*

***(5)******one of the elders.*** *Not an angel! Brighton: “Who better than an elevated saint, who himself has gone through the suffering but now is at peace before God’s holy presence, to tell John to stop weeping by urging him to look at the Lamb of God?”( p. 135) See also Genesis 49:8-10 and Isaiah 42:4.* ***Has triumphed*** *– the victory of Jesus in His death and resurrection, which He shares with all believers, makes it possible for Him to unseal the scroll and reveal everything else that follows.*

**6**Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing **at the center of the throne, encircled** by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had **seven horns** and **seven eyes, which is the seven-fold Spirit of God** sent out into all the earth. **7**He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. **8**And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a **harp** and they were holding golden **bowls full of** **incense, which are the prayers of God’s people.** **9**And they sang **a new song**, saying:

***(6)*** *The vision in* ***concentric circles****: The throne with the lamb in the center; (next ring) 4 living creatures; (next ring) 24 elders; (next ring) many angels; (next ring) every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth.* ***Seven horns*** *see extra handout. The* ***seven eyes of the Lamb are the seven-fold Spirit of God*** *– see how closely the Lamb and the Spirit are connected in our salvation!*

*By the way, though the living creatures and the Lamb are super-natural, they are not freaks – see Revelation 12 & 13 for beasts that are freakish and evil.*

***(8)******Harps*** *were the traditional instruments of worship in Israel (Psalm 33:2).* ***bowls of incense, which are the prayers of God’s people****. Psalm 141:2*

***(9)******New*** *because all the songs of God’s people up to this time have come from the Church Militant; this is the first song from the entire Church Triumphant – the assurance of victory of the Lamb despite the suffering caused by the beast.*

“You are worthy to take the scroll  
    and to open its seals,  
because you were slain,  
    and with your blood you purchased for God  
    persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.  
 **10**You have made them to be a **kingdom and priests to serve our God**,  
    and they will reign on the earth.”

**11**Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. **12**In a loud voice they were saying:

***(10)******kingdom and priests to serve our God*** *(1 Peter 2:5-9)*

*(12-13)* ***God and the Lamb receive praise, honor, glory, and power, but the Lamb receives all these plus wealth, wisdom, and strength.*** *Creation and our intellect might be able to inform us somewhat about God’s praise, honor, glory, and power, but only partially. It is only through the Lamb that we know these things fully, and also know anything of His wealth, wisdom, and strength.*

**“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,  
    to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength  
    and honor and glory and praise!”**

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

**“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb  
    be praise and honor and glory and power,  
for ever and ever!”**

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

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Eugene Peterson, **Reversed Thunder** | Worship is meeting at the center so that our lives are centered in God and not lived eccentrically. We worship so that we live in response to and from this center, the living God. Failure to worship consigns us to a life of spasms and jerks, at the mercy of every advertisement, every seduction, every siren. Without worship we live manipulated and manipulating lives. We move in either frightened panic or deluded lethargy as we are, in turn, alarmed by spectres and soothed by placebos. If there is no center, there is no circumference. People who do not worship are swept into a vast restlessness, epidemic in the world, with no steady direction and no sustaining purpose. | p. 60 |
| The scroll is sealed. . . . It was discussed but not believed; it was copied but not obeyed. One of the great excitements and glories of Christian worship was that the preaching of Christ unsealed the scrolls of scripture. | p. 64 |
| Scripture read and preached discovers that Christ (the Lamb) reveals the meaning of my life and fulfills my destiny. Without preaching, no matter how splendid the throne and how numerous the elders and creatures, there is no assurance that *I* am included and so the consequence is despair, enough to make a person weep. It is not enough to see the glorious throne, hear the wondrous songs, and realize the vast inclusions. If I do not discover that they include me, I will not praise but weep. If I cannot see myself among those who throw their crowns in reckless joy, shouting, I can only hang my head and weep. | p. 65 |

