

Revelation Chapter 5 (Week 6)

Overview of the Chapter:

Revelation 5 continues the heavenly vision from chapter 4, focusing on a sealed scroll (God's plan), the search for one worthy to open it, the slain Lamb (Christ) who prevails, and universal worship. It emphasizes Christ's redemptive victory, bridging throne-room worship to upcoming judgments.

Review the Four Views:

- **Preterist:** Chapter 5 symbolizes Christ's authority to judge 1st-century events (e.g., AD 70).
- **Idealist:** Timeless symbols of Christ's sacrificial victory over evil.
- **Progressive Dispensationalist:** "Already/not yet"—Christ's inauguration of redemption now, future unfolding.
- **Classical Dispensationalist:** Future post-rapture scene, Christ opening Tribulation judgments.

The Scroll and the Search for One Worthy (Rev. 5:1–5)

Key elements: Scroll sealed with seven seals in God's right hand; no one worthy to open it; John weeps; Lion of Judah/Root of David (Christ) prevails.

- **Preterist:** The scroll is God's covenant lawsuit against apostate Israel (fulfilled in AD 70); Christ's worthiness (as Lion/Lamb) authorizes the historical judgments on Jerusalem and Rome; "prevails" refers to His resurrection enabling 1st-century vindication; the Lion/Root imagery (Genesis 49:9; Isaiah 11:1) is fulfilled in Christ's immediate authority over the old covenant order; further clarifies that John's weeping reflects the despair of the early church until Christ's victory is revealed, integrating as the pivot from church letters to seals as AD 70 events, critiquing futurist views for removing the chapter's urgency from John's audience.

Supporting Scriptures: Daniel 12:4 (seal the book until end time, fulfilled historically); Ezekiel 2:9–10 (scroll of lament/judgment); Isaiah 11:1–10 (shoot from Jesse judging with righteousness).

- **Idealist:** Timeless spiritual principles; the scroll symbolizes God's redemptive plan throughout history; no one worthy reflects universal human failure; Christ (Lion conquering evil, Root of eternal hope) is the key, emphasizing sacrificial power over worldly might in ongoing battles; further clarifies that John's weeping represents any believer's despair in the face of evil, with the Lion/Lamb duality modeling how weakness triumphs, critiquing literal views for missing the chapter's multivalent ethical call to trust Christ's victory in every age.

Supporting Scriptures: Genesis 49:9–10 (Lion of Judah ruling); Isaiah 53:7 (lamb to slaughter, symbolic sacrifice); Psalm 2:8 (ask and receive nations as inheritance).

- **Progressive Dispensationalist:** "Already/not yet"; the scroll is God's kingdom plan, inaugurated by Christ's victory ("already" through cross/resurrection) but unfolding progressively ("not yet" full consummation); Lion/Root blend messianic warrior/king imagery with Lamb's sacrifice, showing blended fulfillment across ages; further clarifies that the sealed scroll represents the mystery of the kingdom now revealed in the church yet awaiting earthly fulfillment, critiquing preterism for limiting hope to AD 70 and classical dispensationalism for rigid era separation.

Supporting Scriptures: Hebrews 1:2–3 (Christ heir of all, upholding universe); Daniel 7:13–14 (Son of Man given dominion); Zechariah 6:12–13 (Branch building temple/kingdom).

- **Classical Dispensationalist:** Futuristic; the scroll is the title deed to earth for end-times judgments (post-rapture Tribulation); Christ worthy as Lion (future conqueror) and Root (Davidic king); “prevails” anticipates millennial reign; further clarifies grammatical-historical literalism, where the scroll’s seals initiate the Tribulation, distinguishing this from the church age, critiquing idealism for vagueness and preterism for anachronistic history, and tying to dispensational shifts from grace to judgment.

Supporting Scriptures: Jeremiah 32:10–14 (sealed deed of purchase, future redemption); Amos 3:7 (God reveals plans to prophets); Revelation 22:16 (Root and Offspring of David).

Why does John weep, and how does Christ’s worthiness comfort? Which view clarifies the scroll’s significance best?

The Lamb and the Worship (Rev. 5:6–14)

Key elements: Slain Lamb with seven horns/eyes; takes scroll; harp/golden bowls (prayers); new song of redemption; myriads worship; creation joins praise.

- **Preterist:** Lamb (slain but standing) symbolizes Christ’s sacrificial death/resurrection enabling 1st-century judgments; seven horns/eyes as complete power/omniscience for historical execution; worship celebrates redemption from the old covenant, with “new song” (Psalm 96) fulfilled in the church’s vindication post-AD 70; further clarifies that the bowls of prayers represent the saints’ cries answered in AD 70, integrating as the launch of seals/trumpets as covenant judgments, critiquing futurism for delaying application to John’s persecuted readers.

Supporting Scriptures: Isaiah 53:7 (lamb led to slaughter); Zechariah 4:10 (eyes of the Lord range earth); Exodus 19:5–6 (kingdom of priests, fulfilled historically).

- **Idealist:** Timeless victory; Lamb’s sacrifice conquers evil eternally; horns/eyes symbolize perfect strength/wisdom; universal worship (angels, creatures, redeemed) models response to redemption in all eras, emphasizing prayers (bowls) as ongoing intercession amid spiritual warfare; further clarifies the “new song” as the eternal anthem of the redeemed, portraying Revelation as a spiritual drama of cosmic conflict, critiquing literalism for rigidity.

Supporting Scriptures: John 1:29 (Lamb of God takes away sin); Psalm 96:1 (sing new song to Lord); Philippians 2:10–11 (every knee bows to Christ).

- **Progressive Dispensationalist:** Lamb’s “already” redemptive work (cross) authorizes “not yet” kingdom unfolding; horns/eyes as Spirit’s empowerment (Zechariah 4); new song celebrates progressive inclusion of all nations in covenant, blending present worship with future consummation; further clarifies that the Lamb’s taking of the scroll marks the overlap of ages, with worship reflecting inaugurated redemption extending to creation, critiquing classical dispensationalism for overly rigid separations.

Supporting Scriptures: 1 Peter 1:19 (redeemed by Lamb’s blood); Acts 4:28 (God’s plan fulfilled in Christ); Isaiah 42:1–4 (servant brings justice to nations).

- **Classical Dispensationalist:** Literal future; Lamb takes scroll to initiate Tribulation seals; slain appearance highlights atonement enabling future kingdom; worship by elders (church) and creatures anticipates millennial praise, with “every creature” pointing to restored creation post-Tribulation; further clarifies consistent literal hermeneutic, where horns/eyes represent literal attributes, distinguishing this scene from church age, critiquing preterism for historical overreach and idealism for non-literal excess.

Supporting Scriptures: Leviticus 4:3–12 (sin offering lamb); Daniel 8:3–4 (horns as power); Romans 8:19–23 (creation groans for redemption).

How does the Lamb’s imagery transform views of power? Discuss supporting Scriptures on redemption.

Comparison Table:

Element	Preterist (Gentry)	Idealist (Hamstra)	Progressive Disp. (Pate)	Classical Disp. (Thomas)	Example Supporting Scriptures
Scroll/Search (5:1–5)	Covenant lawsuit against 1st-century Israel	God’s timeless redemptive plan	Inaugurated kingdom plan	Title deed for Tribulation judgments	Dan. 12:4; Gen. 49:9; Heb. 1:2
Lamb/Worship (5:6–14)	Authority for AD 70 judgments	Eternal sacrificial victory	Progressive redemption	Atonement for millennial reign	Isa. 53:7; John 1:29; Rev. 22:16
Application	Historical vindication	Spiritual faithfulness in trials	Kingdom living now/future	Preparation for end times	Ps. 96:1; Phil. 2:10; Rom. 8:19

Questions:

1. How does chapter 5 build on chapter 4’s throne scene?
2. Which view best explains the Lamb’s dual imagery (slain yet standing)?
3. What does this chapter teach about worship in daily life?

Homework: Read Revelation 6 and note judgment connections.

Prayer: Thank God for the Lamb’s victory and seek worthy lives.

M. Robert Mulholland Jr., in his commentary on Revelation within the *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation* (Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), adopts an **idealist interpretive approach** with strong elements of "already/not yet" eschatology. He views Revelation not primarily as a roadmap for end-times events or a historical chronicle, but as a profound apocalyptic vision revealing timeless spiritual realities about God's sovereignty, the believer's call to radical discipleship, and the ongoing cosmic struggle between good and evil. Mulholland emphasizes that Revelation subverts first-century Jewish messianic expectations: Instead of a military conqueror delivering Israel from exile and establishing an earthly kingdom, Jesus fulfills these hopes through His sacrificial death and resurrection, inaugurating a spiritual kingdom that includes Gentiles and requires endurance amid tribulation.

Key beliefs include:

- **God's Sovereignty and Rejection of Dualism:** God is absolutely sovereign over all creation and evil forces; there is no metaphysical dualism (e.g., equal opposing powers like in Gnosticism) or pantheism. Evil is subordinate, and creation is intimately bound to God yet distinct.
- **Already/Not Yet Kingdom:** The kingdom is "already" inaugurated through Christ's cross and resurrection (cleansing sin, forming a priestly people), but "not yet" fully consummated, creating a "between" state where believers live in tension, facing persecution while embodying kingdom values.
- **Radical Discipleship:** Revelation calls for holy living in an unholy world ("Babylon"), resisting assimilation to cultural idolatry, immorality, and oppression. Themes of perseverance, faithfulness, and martyrdom are central, as believers participate in Christ's victory through suffering.
- **Role of the Cross:** Christ's martyrdom is pivotal, redefining triumph and extending redemption to all nations, contrasting God's redemptive order with rebellious chaos.
- **New Jerusalem vs. Fallen Babylon:** A major contrast symbolizing two ways of being—God's kingdom of peace vs. Satan's empire of exploitation—guiding ethical living.

Mulholland critiques overly literal (e.g., futurist) or allegorical interpretations that detach symbols from their Jewish roots, arguing for understanding imagery in its original context for contemporary application.

Explanations on Symbolism in Revelation

Mulholland stresses that Revelation's symbolism is rooted in first-century Jewish apocalyptic imagery, drawn heavily from the Old Testament (e.g., Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah), intertestamental literature, and John's visionary experience. Symbols are "multivalent" (multi-layered) and not meant for speculative timelines but to reveal God's mysteries, encourage faithfulness, and subvert expectations. He avoids rigid allegorization, urging readers to grasp how symbols would resonate with John's original audience—persecuted Jewish Christians—while applying them timelessly. Key explanations include:

- **The Throne and God (Rev. 4–5):** Symbolizes eternal sovereignty; jasper/sardius/rainbow evoke priestly gems (Exodus 28:17–20) and covenant mercy (Genesis 9:13–17); no dualism—God rules over evil without equal opposition.
- **The Lamb (Rev. 5:6):** Central symbol—slain yet standing, representing Christ's sacrificial victory (Isaiah 53:7; John 1:29); subverts warrior Messiah expectations, showing power through weakness; seven horns/eyes denote complete strength/omniscience (Zechariah 4:10).
- **The Scroll (Rev. 5:1–5):** God's redemptive plan/mystery (Daniel 12:4; Ezekiel 2:9–10); sealed until Christ's worthiness opens it, symbolizing inaugurated fulfillment through the cross.
- **Numbers (e.g., Seven):** Completeness/perfection (e.g., seven spirits as Holy Spirit's fullness, Isaiah 11:2); four (living creatures) as creation's totality (Ezekiel 1:5–10).
- **Beasts and Babylon:** Anti-God powers (Beast from sea/earth as oppressive empires/false prophets, Daniel 7); Babylon as rebellious world system (Jeremiah 51), contrasting New Jerusalem (Isaiah 65:17–25) as redeemed order.
- **Alpha and Omega (Rev. 1:8):** God's eternal nature (Isaiah 44:6), sovereign over history.
- **New Song/Worship (Rev. 5:9–10):** Redemption forming a priestly kingdom (Exodus 19:6; Psalm 96:1), including all nations.
- **Millennium (Rev. 20):** Symbolic of the church age or spiritual reign, not literal 1,000 years; focuses on binding Satan through the cross (John 12:31–32).

Mulholland's symbolism explanations prioritize transformative application: Symbols confront complacency, call for holy living, and assure ultimate victory in God's order.