

The Lamb Is Worthy to Take the Book



SABBATH—JANUARY 19

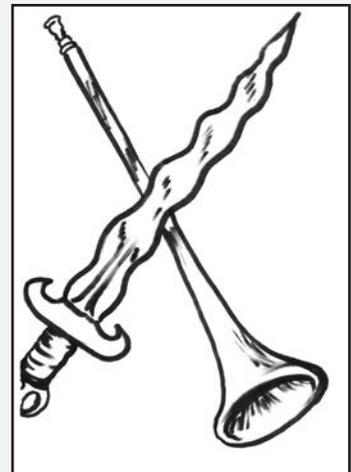
READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Revelation 4; Revelation 5.

MEMORY VERSE: “One of the leaders said to me, ‘Stop crying. See! The Lion [Jesus] from the family group of Judah has power and has won. He can open the book and break its seven locks. He is of [from] the family of David’ ” (Revelation 5:5, NLV).

LAST WEEK, we looked at Jesus’ messages to His people on earth. Now God’s message to John moves from earth to heaven. There, John sees things that “ ‘must happen after this’ ” (Revelation 4:1, ERV). What does John see? He sees the future.

In Revelation 4 and 5, Jesus shows John God’s throne room in heaven. John uses word pictures or signs in Revelation 4 and 5 to show us God’s plan to save us. John also shows us that God controls history. But before John shows us the future, he gives us a picture of Jesus starting His work for us in heaven. This work is very important for us on earth.

Did you notice that John uses simple words and clear pictures to write God’s messages to the seven churches? That is going to change. From now on, John will use word pictures that are much harder to understand. John borrowed a lot of his word pictures from the Old Testament. So, we need to understand the word pictures used in the Old Testament first. Then we will understand correctly the word pictures that John uses in the book of Revelation.



The word pictures in the Old Testament help us understand the word pictures in the New Testament.

IN HEAVEN'S THRONE ROOM (Revelation 4:1–8)

Jesus invites John to heaven to see what will happen in the future. Starting in Revelation 4:1, Jesus shows John a panorama. A panorama is a full view of something in pictures. The panorama that Jesus shows John is a short but full history in pictures of the war between God and Satan. The panorama starts with pictures of history from John's time and ends with pictures of the Second Coming.

Revelation 4:1–8; Ezekiel 1:26–28; and Revelation 5:11–14 show us heaven's throne room. What do these verses teach us about the royal beauty of God's throne room?

John saw that the door to the temple in heaven was open. He looked into the temple and saw God's throne. God's throne is a word picture for His power over everything He made. The rainbow around God's throne is a word picture that shows God keeps His promises. But Satan went to war against God's power and broke up the perfect peace in heaven. Satan is God's enemy. Satan tried to steal God's power for himself. The question at the center of the worldwide war between good and evil is: Who has the real power to rule? God or Satan? A group of elders, or leaders, meets in the throne room in heaven to announce the truth: God alone has the true power to rule everything.



The rainbow around God's throne is a word picture that shows us that God keeps His promises.

What do Revelation 4:8–11 and Revelation 5:9–14 teach us about true worship? Why do Revelation 4:8–11 say we should worship God? Why do Revelation 5:9–14 say we should worship the Lamb? Why is God worthy of our worship?

Revelation 4 gives us a picture of heaven's throne room. This chapter also shows us that God is worshiped there all the time. Revelation 4 praises God's power to make things. Revelation 5 celebrates God's plan to save us from sin. Revelation 4 and 5 show us that true worship includes celebrating God's work as the One who made us and saves us. God's power can make everything new. He promises to do exactly that.

The God who made us also is the Lamb who was killed for our sins. What hope do we get from this idea?

THE MEETING IN HEAVEN'S THRONE ROOM (Revelation 4:6–8)

Revelation 4:4 tells us about the 24 leaders in God's throne room in heaven. Another name for these leaders is elders. The 24 elders are not angels. The book of Revelation always shows angels standing when they are next to God. But the 24 elders sit on thrones. The 24 elders also wear white clothes. All God's people wear white clothes in John's vision (Revelation 3:4, 5; Revelation 7:13,14). The white they wear is a word picture. It shows us that Jesus' holy life covers His people the same as clothes. The 24 elders wear crowns on their heads too. The word "crowns" comes from the Greek word "stephanos [ste'-fä-nos]." The crowns are a sign that the ones who wear them won a prize. Only God's people who win the war over sin get to wear these special crowns (James 1:12). So, all these hints help us to see that the 24 elders may be believers that God wakes up from the dead.

The 24 elders do not show up in the Bible until John writes about them. They may be the same people that God woke up from the dead when Jesus died (Matthew 27:51–53). Ephesians 4:8 says that when Jesus went up to heaven, He took a group of people with Him. It is very possible that this group of people are the same people as the 24 elders.

If so, these 24 elders who go up to heaven with Jesus become witnesses of God's actions in the plan to save His people. They see that God is fair in all that He does to save us. In Revelation 4, the 24 elders sit on thrones in God's throne room. They fall down in front of Jesus and worship Him because He died on the cross (Revelation 5:8).

Revelation 4:6–8 also say there were "four living things" (Revelation 4:6, ICB). Compare these four living things to the four living things in Ezekiel 1:5–14 and Ezekiel 10:20–25 and the angels in Isaiah 6:2, 3? How are they the same?

The four living things are holy and powerful. They serve God and guard His throne (Psalm 99:1). Their six wings show how fast they act to do whatever God asks. Their many eyes show how smart they are. One living thing looks the same as a lion. The 2nd living thing looks the same as a cow, the 3rd the same as a man, and the 4th as an eagle. Together, the four living things, the many angels around God's throne in the temple, and the 24 elders show us that people from heaven and earth are in God's throne room.



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THE CLOSED ROLL OF WRITING PAPER (Revelation 5:1–4)

In Revelation 5:1–4, John tells us that he sees a scroll. A scroll is a roll of writing paper. Now read about the scroll that Isaiah talks about in Isaiah 29:11, 12. How does the closed scroll in Isaiah help us to understand the meaning of the closed scroll in Revelation 5:1?

The Greek that John uses shows us that the scroll is on the throne next to God the Father's right hand. The scroll waited for Someone who was worthy to open it.

Ellen G. White tells us about the writing on the scroll: "It is history. This history shows us how God cares for His people and guides them. The scroll also shows us the things that will happen in the future in different countries and in the church. Many other things are written on the scroll: God's sayings, His power, commandments, and laws. The scroll also contains God's wise advice, written in word pictures, or signs, and the history of all the governments on the earth. In word pictures and signs, the scroll tells the story about the power of each nation and people, from the beginning of earth's history until the end of time."—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript [writings] Releases [printed material]*, volume 9, page 7, adapted.

The closed scroll contains God's plans to solve the sin problem and save humans. This plan is a mystery. We cannot fully understand this plan now. But we will understand it at the Second Coming (read Revelation 10:7).

Revelation 5:5–7 tell us that Jesus takes the closed scroll. Why is Jesus the only Person in all heaven and earth who is worthy to open it?

At first, a short but awful waiting time happens in heaven. It seems that there is no one who can open the scroll. This waiting time is a word picture. It shows us that Satan's war against God is the reason that no one can open the scroll. Satan stole the control of this planet from God and made himself king. John cries when there is no one worthy to open the scroll. John's tears are a word picture too. They show us the sad feelings of all God's people who cried since Adam's time for God to save them from sin. The closed scroll was God's plan to solve the sin problem. Jesus is the only One who has the power to open it, because He won the war over sin for us.



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THE LAMB IS WORTHY TO TAKE THE BOOK (Revelation 5:8–14)

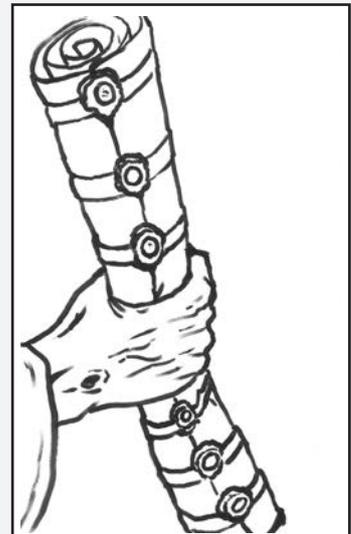
Read Revelation 5:8–14 along with Ephesians 1:20–23 and Hebrews 10:12. These verses talk about something that gives us hope and comfort in a life with very little hope at all. What do these verses tell us that gives us hope?

Jesus is the Lamb. He comes to the throne and takes the closed book or scroll. Yesterday, we saw that a scroll is a roll of writing paper. When Jesus takes the scroll, it shows He has all power in heaven and on earth (read Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20–22). In that moment, everyone in heaven and all the people living on other planets agree about something. They agree that Jesus is the true King of the earth. Jesus is the only One who has the true power to rule over the earth. Adam lost that power. But Jesus won back the power that Adam lost to Satan.

When Jesus takes the scroll, it shows that He holds the power to control everyone's future in His hands. That is why the four living things and the 24 elders, or leaders, fall down in front of Jesus and worship Him again. They do the same thing in Revelation 5:9 when they sing this song to Jesus: " 'You are worthy to take the scroll and break open its seals [locks]. You are worthy because you were put to death' " (NIRV). The angels sing this song, along with the 24 elders, who seem to be examples of Jesus' power to wake up the dead. This song shows that they believe in Jesus' power to save humans. With His blood, Jesus paid the price for sinners. He offers to save us and promises us a beautiful future with Him. Yes, our life with Jesus will be beautiful. But in this life, we cannot make a picture in our minds of heaven's beauty.

Now the angels around God's throne join the four living things and the 24 elders. Together, they sing praises to both God the Father and their King, Jesus (Revelation 5:12). At this time, all life in heaven and on earth gives praise to both God the Father and Jesus (Revelation 5:13). When everyone finishes praising God, the four living things say, " 'Amen' " (Revelation 5:14, ERV). Then the 24 elders bow down and worship God.

Some scientists say that one day outer space will burn up, fail, or break apart. That future is so different from the Bible's promises about the future. How can we start, right now, being happy about our future life in heaven?



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WHAT THE GIFT OF GOD'S SPIRIT MEANS TO US (Acts 2:32–36)

Acts 2:1–4 shows us one of the most important times in the history of God's plan to save us. It is the time when Jesus starts His work as our King and our High Priest. A high priest is a holy leader. He works to save his people from sin. Jesus is our High Priest. He works for us right now in heaven's sanctuary. Heaven's sanctuary is the place where God's throne is. After Jesus wakes up from the dead, He goes to heaven and sits on the throne at God's right side (Hebrews 12:2; read also Revelation 3:21). Now Jesus is ready to finish God's plan to save us. He can do everything that needs to be done. Jesus also is our Lawyer in heaven's sanctuary. Jesus allows sinners to come to God the Father and be forgiven.



After Jesus wakes up from the dead, He goes to heaven and sits on the throne at God's right side. Now Jesus is ready to finish God's plan to save us.

Acts 2:32–36 and John 7:39 talk about God's promise to give Jesus' followers the Holy Spirit. Why did Jesus need to be honored in heaven first before God poured the Holy Spirit on Jesus' followers on earth?

Jesus receives glory and praise in heaven. Then God pours His Spirit on Jesus' followers on earth. Revelation 5:6 tells us about the "seven spirits of God, which are sent out into all the earth" (Revelation 5:6, NIV). The seven Spirits are a word picture for the Holy Spirit's work on earth. One of the first things Jesus does for us as our High Priest is send us the Holy Spirit. God pours the Holy Spirit on the church to show us that He accepts Jesus' death for our sins.

"Jesus' trip to heaven is a sign. It shows His followers that God will soon pour His Spirit on them. . . . Jesus walks inside heaven's gates. Then He sits on His throne. Angels all around His throne give Him glory. As soon as this celebration ends, God pours His Spirit on Jesus' followers. This act adds much more glory to the glory that Jesus already shares with God the Father. When God pours His Spirit on the church, God shows everyone on earth that He accepts Jesus as the King and High Priest of humans. Jesus sends the Holy Spirit from heaven to His followers to show them He now has all power in heaven and on earth."—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [leaders and teachers]*, pages 38, 39, adapted.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “ ‘To My Father, and Your Father,’ ” pages 829–835, in *The Desire of Ages*; “The Gift of the Spirit,” pages 47–56; in *The Acts of the Apostles [leaders and teachers]*.

The message in Revelation 4 and 5 is very important to God's people who live at the end of earth's history. God's gift of the Holy Spirit shows us when the church started preaching the Good News. The center of the message in Revelation 4 and 5 is Jesus. God made Jesus our High Priest and King. [A high priest is a holy leader. He works to save his people from sin. Jesus is our High Priest. He works for us right now in heaven's sanctuary. Heaven's sanctuary is the temple in heaven where Jesus works to save His people.] This teaching was at the center of Christian beliefs in New Testament times (Hebrews 8:1). It also was the center of Christian preaching (Acts 2:32–36; Acts 5:30, 31). This truth made the first Christians want to work for Jesus. It was the reason why their faith and courage stayed strong, even when people attacked them and when life grew hard (Acts 7:55, 56; Romans 8:34). Because Jesus' followers had faith in Him as their High Priest and King, many people accepted the Good News. From that time, God's kingdom showed itself to everyone on earth. God's kingdom keeps showing itself to people everywhere today. Jesus continues to work with His Holy Spirit to help His people.

We must never forget something: only the Good News about Jesus can touch human hearts and change them. Only the Good News can lead people to love and obey God. Only the Good News can lead people to give God glory and worship Him (Revelation 14:7). Our only hope is in our Savior. He is our Priest and King in heaven's sanctuary. He is with His people now. He will always be with them until the end (Matthew 28:20). Jesus holds the future in His loving hands.

So, let us never forget that we must keep the Good News at the center of everything we do. The power of the Good News will bring full success to our preaching. We must preach the last message about mercy from Jesus to suffering humans and to people who are not saved. Nothing else we preach is more important than the Cross and the truth that teaches us about God.

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

① One day we will praise God in heaven. But what are ways we can praise Him now for all He has done?



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