

Alpha & Omega

Bible Studies in the Book of Revelation

Study #5: Revelation 5

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ABOUT “Alpha & Omega”

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

~ Revelation 1:8

Alpha & Omega is the second series of Bible Studies especially written so that you can do them alone at home, or with others in a group. They don't depend on a leader or someone affirming the right answer. The title of this series comes from the introduction of John's letter to God's people, preparing them for the persecution and difficulty the Church of Christ was about to face. But it gives them (and us) two views of this: the seen reality of what God's people experience, and the unseen reality of God's glorious and gracious rule in Christ over all these events. They suffered, and we will suffer, but Christ rules even over the suffering ... and he is returning soon with saving victory for his Church!

INTRODUCTION TO REVELATION 5

At first, Revelation 4 seems to bring this episode of John's vision to a climax. But chapter 5 immediately continues without a break (imagine that the chapter division isn't there – it wasn't there in the original letter!). Verse 1 begins “then” stressing (as “then” does throughout the book) that there is an immediate movement from what has just been described to what is about to be described. And the chapter unfolds with one vision immediately following another: v1 “I saw;” v2 “I saw;” v5 “Then ... see;” v6 “Then I saw;” v11 “The I looked and heard;” v13 “Then I heard”. The movement from one scene to another is overwhelming, but so is what is seen!

THE SCROLL

In John's day, scrolls were a conventional way of recording longer documents: they could be up to 10 m long, so they clearly contained a lot of words. But this scroll is written on both sides! Some scrolls of the day had a brief summary or title written on the reverse, to be read from the back of the rolled-up scroll. But this scroll has a full set of writing on both sides. The image is of a comprehensive document. Scrolls would be sealed if the contents were intended to be hidden: that could be for a will that was to be read after someone's death, or secret instructions for a warrior leader from his king – the more likely image here. If there were witnesses, each would use his own seal, and if possible, be there as an on-going witness when the seals were broken open. Yet as Revelation unfolds, we learn that this scroll is not instructions about what *should* happen, but is the script of what *will* happen as God unfolds the history of the dispensation from Christ's first coming to his second coming. This history has been sealed and hidden from view, and hidden by God at that (as indicated by the holy perfection of “seven seals:” God's Spirit is witness to the writing and therefore must also be witness to the opening of the scroll). The scroll is in God's right hand, the hand symbolising authority and power, but *he* is not about to open it, for he is holding it out (probably “on” his open hand rather than “in” his closed hand), waiting for his warrior to put his plans into action.

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GETTING STARTED

Please remember that this is God's Word. God used John to write God's words in God's way for us. So

1. Pray, asking God to give you his Spirit so that you will honour him, understand his word, and learn how to live better for Jesus.
 2. Read the passage listed above for this study. What is it mainly about?
 3. Now discuss/think about/answer the questions that follow.
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THE DOUBLE-SIDED SCROLL

Please read Revelation 5:1-7 & Ezekiel 2:9-3:3

1. **Verses 1 & 2.** See the study's *Introduction* for an explanation of these scrolls
 - a. **How are the two scrolls (Ezekiel and Revelation) similar and different?**

 - b. **Who opens Ezekiel's scroll?**

 - c. **On this basis, what qualifications would someone need to open the scroll in Revelation?**

2. **Verses 3 & 4.** Read Colossians 1:16
 - a. **Why doesn't God just open the scroll?**

 - b. **Why was John so distressed that the scroll could not be opened?**

3. **Verses 5 & 6. What attributes of Christ are identified in these verses?**
 - a. **Lion ...**(See Job 10:16; Isaiah 31:4; Jeremiah 50:44)

 - b. **... of the tribe of Judah** (See the next verse)

 - c. **The Root of David ...** (Revelation 2:16)

 - d. **... who has triumphed**

 - e. **Lamb**

 - f. **At the centre of the throne**

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g. **Standing at the centre of the throne** (Luke 22:69; Colossians 3:1)

h. **Having the Seven Spirits**

4. **Verse 7. What enabling Jesus to *take* the scroll rather than God giving it to him?** (verse 2)

WORSHIP OF THE LAMB

Please read Revelation 5:8-14

5. Ignoring, for the moment, the details, **What are the *overall* similarities and differences between the worship here and in chapter 4? What does this reveal about Jesus?**

6. **What does verse 8 reveal about *how* those surrounding the throne worship?** (Psalm 33:3; Psalm 141:2)

7. **In Chapter 4, why was God declared to be “worthy” of worship?**

8. **In Chapter 5, why is Jesus worthy of the same worship?**

9. **This is a *new* song. What is the significance of new songs in God’s worship?** (Psalm 149)

10. The “New Song” is sung by the Creatures & Elders around the throne.

a. **How do the angels in heaven respond?**

b. **How does the rest of creation respond?** (Philippians 2:5-11)

11. **In the light of this passage: What can you thank God for? What can you pray for others? What can you trust God for?**

12. **In the light of this passage, what changes do you need to make: In your faith? In your worship? In your attitude? In your life?**