

are and were created," the Revised Version says, "Because of thy will they are, and were created." His will was the creative cause.

This well may be called the "Oratorio of Creation."

CHAPTER V

THE BOOK WITH SEVEN SEALS

Text (5:1-14)

Introduction

1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back, close sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? 3 And no one in the heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look thereon. 4 And I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open the book, or to look thereon: 5 and one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not; behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome to open the book and the seven seals thereof. 6 And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. 7 And he came, and he taketh it out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne. 8 And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, 10 and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth. 11 And I saw, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 12 saying with a great voice, Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing. 13 And every created thing which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying, Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever. 14 And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped.

The last chapter which we have just studied centers its symbolism around the throne in the "way of the Holiest of all," where the crucified and risen Christ sits on God's right hand.

While in the earthly tabernacle there were the altar of burnt

offering, the lavar and the holy place, with its furniture, consisting of the seven-armed candlestick, the table of show bread and its altar of incense, here in the vision of the most Holy Place, or heaven itself, these aforementioned pieces of furniture and the veil are gone. Paul tells us in (Hebrews 9:8) that the veil in the tabernacle and, later the temple on earth were to pass. "The Holy Spirit thus signifying that the way into the Holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as yet the first tabernacle was yet standing."

Furthermore Paul declared this veil before the Holiest of all represented the prepared body of Jesus Christ. (Heb. 10:5) He added, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say His flesh; and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith," et. (Heb. 10:19-22)

When Christ was crucified, and yielded up the spirit as a ransom for sin, the veil was rent in twain from top to bottom. So in this vision there is no veil. We are looking into heaven itself "Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." (Heb. 6:20)

"For Christ is not entered into the holy place made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." (Heb. 9:24) So the first part of the vision reveals Christ seated at the right hand of God.

In the fourth chapter, which covers the first part of the vision, the only activity is the worship of the four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders, or princes of God. The theme of their worship is "Creation," as revealed by their anthem:

"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou hast *created* all things and because of thy will they are and were created." (Rev. 4:11)

If we had no other proof that these are heavenly intelligences and not redeemed men, this anthem would establish it. They sang not of redemption, for no redemption was ever needed by an obedient angel and no fallen angel was ever promised it. As created beings, higher than man, they sang of the glory of God's creation.

While the first part of this great vision of a door opened in heaven is centered around the throne and the worshipping angels,

in the second part the attention is directed to "a book," or scroll (such being the form of books in that day). This scroll is seen in "the right hand of him that sat upon the throne." It was written within and in the backside and sealed with seven seals.

The very atmosphere of this part of the vision assures us that this scroll represents something of transcendent importance. This sealed scroll being a book containing the hidden mysteries of the future, was unrevealed to both angels and men.

vs. 1, 2 But the contents were of such grave import that a strong angel proclaimed with a loud voice: "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?"

The angel's interest in having the book opened reminds us of what Peter said concerning the desire of angels to look into man's salvation: "Which things the angels desire to look into." (I Peter 1:12)

vs. 3 John records that no man in heaven, nor in earth was able to open the scroll, neither to look therein." The word "man" does not occur in the Greek. Literally it reads, "no one" was found, either among angels, or among men.

This recalls Christ's own statement while in the flesh, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man (again the word man is not in the Greek) no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." (Matt. 24:36)

Again in (Acts 1:7), while addressing His apostles He said, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."

vs. 4 This caused John not only to weep, but to weep much. His distress shows that the finding of one worthy to open the book was a matter of greatest consequence.

What a revelation of John's interest in the future of the church, to which he had given so many years of labor and of which he was the last apostle! He was now old and about ready to depart. His intense anxiety to be able to penetrate the secrets of the future, as it related to the fortunes of the church which he loved better than life itself, is understandable.

His burdened spirit implores with a flood of tears that some one might be found worthy to open and read the scroll. And the longing of his loving heart is answered.

vs. 5 And one of the elders (one of the twenty-four) said unto him, "Weep not: behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to lose the seals thereof."

One of the twenty-four elders, or one of the heavenly princes, so speaking to John makes clear that the duty of instructing a prophet in things pertaining to spiritual matters has never been laid upon a human being under either the old or the new Testament Covenants. Such a duty marks out these elders as being heavenly beings.

vs. 6 The prophet turns to see the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, and to his amazement, the Christ, who is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, now is "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." (John 1:29)

At Christ's second coming He will return as the victorious Sovereign—the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, but in the mediatorial reign John saw Him as "the Lamb that was slain."

This Lamb had seven horns. A horn is ever a symbol of power—a symbol of kings, kingdoms or power. Seven horns here, then symbolize power without limitation, since seven is the symbol of perfection.

"The seven eyes" he says "are the seven Spirits of God." We have already, in the study of chapter one, learned that the seven Spirits symbolize the fullness of the Spirit without measure which Christ possessed. The sending of this Holy Spirit to the earth (John here says "sent forth into all the earth), Christ promised just before His departure.

"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when He is come, he will reprove the world of sin and of judgment." (John 16:7, 8)

The Christ makes known His wisdom through the Holy Spirit. "Howbeit when he, the spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." (John 16:13)

So we see "the seven horns," signified the perfection of sovereign power, and the "seven eyes," or "seven spirits of God" signified perfection of wisdom. The combined symbols represented what Paul said of Christ: "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." (I Cor. 1:24)

vs. 7, 8 John saw the Lamb take the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne." This, truly, was the investiture of the King. This proclaimed His right to rule and control the unfolding events of the age to come.

Upon Christ taking the Book, the twenty-four angelic princes fell down before the Lamb, having golden harps and vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints.

This angelic function was dealt with in the fourth chapter. They are here represented as presenting the prayers of the saints on the earth, before the throne. What a comforting thought that our petitions are presented before the throne of grace by none other than these princes of God! What heavenly import and dignity are given our prayers.

The Heavenly Doxologies *Text (5:9-14)*

These elders sang a new song; new, because it is in praise of a new triumph of Christ, who has been found worthy to open the seals which are to "uncover" the events of the future.

ing the "Oratorio of Creation," here there is being sung the "Oratorio

Whereas, in the fourth chapter, we hear the angelic princes singing of Redemption."

Music lovers will understand that an oratorio is a musical composition in which solos and choruses are sung in accompaniment to instruments. Here we see Cherubim and Seraphim and angelic princes, with their golden harps, together constituting a heavenly choir, chanting celestial music.

Note the arrangement and order of these musical numbers.

The oratorio begins with a quartet, the four living creatures, singing the seraph's song. "Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." (Rev. 4:8)

This is followed by the massed singing and playing of the twenty-four princes.

"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor, and power, for Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." (Rev. 4:11)

Thus we see the first part of the oratorio is devoted to the subject of the creation. The created angelic intelligences, having never needed nor experienced redemption, could sing only in praise of their creator.

Following the singing of creation there is heard a solo voice of a strong angel;

“Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?”
(Rev. 5:2)

Then follows the gladsome response by one of the elders:

“Weep not: behold the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed (or overcome) to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof.” (Rev. 5:5)

When the Lamb takes the book out of the hand of the Creator, the quartet and the choir of heavenly princes break forth in unison, singing the new song.

“Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made them to be unto our God kings and priests: and they shall reign on the earth.” (Rev. 5:9, 10)

Then the entire angelic choir, consisting of ten thousand times ten thousand and thousand of thousands bursts forth in majestic chorus, which must have reverberated throughout the corridors of glory. They sang perfectly as one voice and with a loud voice:

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.”

Then comes the grand finale of this stirring oratorio as it comes to a swelling crescendo. In this concluding epilogue of this transcendently glorious oratorio the “four living creatures,” or seraphim and cherubim; the elders, or angelic princes; the myriads of angels, heavenly creatures a little higher creation than man (Hebrews 2:6, 7); and every created thing which is in heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them join in mighty chorus in praising both Creator and Redeemer:

“Blessing and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne (the Creator) and unto the Lamb (the Redeemer), for ever and ever.” (Rev. 5:13)

Then as the heavenly oratorio, like the sound of many waters, dies away, there is heard the sound of a great and grand “Amen.” It is chanted by the “four living creatures,” or the highest range of God’s angelic intelligences, the cherubim and seraphim.

Then there seems to fall a great hush and breathless silence as

the twenty-four heavenly princes fall down to worship Him who liveth forever and ever.

Truly we have been listening through the open door to the oratorio of the Choir Invisible!

This instrumented Heavenly choir has prepared us for the opening of the seals. How fitting this should be:

The prophets of old prophesied to the tune of instrumental music:

“Thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp before them; and they shall prophesy.”
(I Samuel 10:5)

The hand of the Lord came upon Elisha when the minstrel played.

“But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him.” (II Kings 3:15)

The sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun prophesied with harp, psalteries and cymbals (I Chron. 25:3-6)

And Habakkuk closed his prophesies with instructions “to the chief singer on my stringed instruments.” (Habakkuk 3:19)

As the prophets of old spoke to the accompaniment of instrumental music so the opening of the seals was preceded by the massed choirs of heaven and earth singing this wondrously soul-inspiring oratorio.

No wonder Christ in the model prayer taught them to pray, “Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:10) It is His Divine will that singing, and with instruments shall be done by choirs on both sides of the veil—heaven and earth.

CHAPTER VI

THE OPENING OF THE SEALS

Text (6:1-17)

INTRODUCTION

1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, Come. **2** And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and he that sat