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Revelation 5: Who Is Qualified to Open the Title Deed to the Earth

1 And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. 2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?" 3 And no one in heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look into it. 4 And I began to weep greatly, because no one was found worthy to open the book, or to look into it; 5 and one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals." 6 And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. 7 And He came, and He took it out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. 8 And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four 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 sang a new song, saying,

"Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

10 "And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

11 And I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice,

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."

13 And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying,

"To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever."

14 And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell

down and worshiped.

We spent 3 glorious weeks in chapter 4 of Revelation. This morning we come to the chapter that we could argue contains the most important document and information in all of the Bible.

Chapter 4 and chapter 5 are an interlude that set up the drama that begins in chapter 6. Indeed, chapter 6 would not be possible without the drama that happens in these 2 chapters. Chapter 6 is literally what happens on earth as the Lamb begins to open the seals.

This revelation, directly from God, lays the foundation for the rest of the book. Paradise is lost in Genesis chapter 3. Paradise is regained in Revelation chapter 5. Positionally. The legal documents are in place in chapter 5, but the implementation is described for us in great detail in chapters 6 - 19.

A judge may legally declare and issue documents that some real estate belongs to some party, but it may take an army to actually take that property that is legally declared as belonging to the rightful owner.

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, so also death was passed on to all men, because all sinned. 18 So then, just as one trespass brought condemnation for all men, so also one act of righteousness brought justification and life for all men. 19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

Let's take a little side trip, a side bar, if you will, to set up what's happening in this chapter. All the way back to Genesis chapter 1. The final verses of the beginnings of man and the earth God gave to him.

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our

likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 27 And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 And God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” 29 Then God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; 30 and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food”; and it was so. 31 And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

The original ownership contract of the earth. God gave it to His created man and woman told them to subdue it and multiply in it, and enjoy it.

But Adam and Eve sinned and fell onto a slavery caused by their sins that defaulted and forfeited the creation to the person who enslaved the man and the women. Satan. And then like dominoes, every human born to Adam's seed was born into sin. And Satan usurped the rule here on this earth, because all men are born sinners.

So, then, Satan is enthroned in property that doesn't belong to him, by evil trickery. What we've got here in this passage in Revelation chapter 5 is the title deed to this earth. Still under God's ultimate control, and OH, wouldn't Satan love to have that.

Let's look together at this narrative that claims to fully restore the title deed to this world to a man, like Adam, but One who is worthy to have the kingdom here.

Adam defaulted and forfeited. We're looking for a man that has not. A sinless Son of God.

1 And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals.

This would need no explanation to the original hearers. In the ancient world a writ of inheritance, a title deed, a will, would be written on a parchment, and rolled up, and sealed with a hot wax that may have had a signet shape to it.

No one would be worthy to open it, unless they had that matching signet that was pressed into a distinct shape. You have no authority to open the will and the deed unless you have the very signet that sealed it. Like a key. You couldn't break those seals and open the document unless you had the authority of the key that sealed it.

So the search goes out;

2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?"

We're looking for the heir that has the signet that matches the imprint in the wax seals who is the only person authorized to open the document.

Do you remember the story of the vineyard that Jesus gave just before His crucifixion in Matthew 21?

33 "Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT AND DUG A WINE PRESS IN IT, AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey. 34 "And when the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. 35 "And the vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. 36 "Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. 37 "But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 38 "But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him,

and seize his inheritance.' 39 "And they took him, and threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

Did you follow the logic of the story. Those vine growers are acting in direct response to their king. Their "father" according to Jesus. The Devil.

And the devil would really like to own the vineyard. He seizes the opportunity to murder the heir, the rightful owner of the vineyard. And it was a good plan, except, the rightful heir of this world arose from the grave. He didn't stay dead.

2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?"

It would have to be someone who is sinless. Sin defaults the rule back to the one who enslaves the sinners. It would have to be a man. God gave this world to a man, a son. Is there anyone like that to be found?

3 And no one in heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look into it.

Every single son of Adam's race is tried, and fails. No one is worthy. Nobody has the key to open these seals. Satan is safe in his usurped role of lord of this earth, ruler of this darkness, as long as no one is found who can open this scroll.

4 And I began to weep greatly, because no one was found worthy to open the book, or to look into it;

Why does John weep? We can go to the shortest verse in the bible and come up with the exact same emotion for the exact same reason. Death.

Remember in John 11, when Jesus arrives at the scene of Mary and Martha and they are devastated because their brother Lazarus was sick and he died.

Jn. 11:32 Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."

33 When Jesus therefore saw her crying, and the Jews who came with her also crying, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled,

34 and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see."

35 Jesus wept.

36 So the Jews were saying, "See how He loved him!"

37 But some of them said, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?"

Jesus weeps over the same thing John is weeping over in this scene in Revelation 5. Satan has ravaged this world. Corruption and death and confusion and evil reign in this world where Satan rules.

Death death death. Death reigns. Spiritual death, a disconnect from God's love and God's light. A spiral into darkness. Wickedness and corruption are the default in this fallen world.

And, beloved, you ain't seen nothing yet. As awful and sad as this world is, when God removes the restraining influence of reason, based in this book, and lived out by His people here, the sadness goes magnitudes darker.

We weep because this world is disconnected from it's God. We weep over the darkness and death and misery and corruption of this world held in terror by an evil usurper.

Whenever you see Jesus moved with overwhelming emotion, that's the reason. Matthew 9:35 *Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness. 36 When He saw the crowds, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

Everywhere Jesus went, His emotion is sorrow caused by the universal spiritual death and separation of people from their God. And not just separation, but Satan is tearing the sheep to pieces. Satan ravages God's sheep.

To Jesus the world is full of sheep who are helpless against their predator, Satan, and who are ravaged and destroyed. Sheep without a shepherd. Darkness. Sadness. Death. Satan loves it so. God hates it.

This document with the seals is about to reverse the curse. The curse makes those of us who understand God's heart for His sheep, weep with Him over all that is lost. John weeps when no one is found with the key to unlock this title deed to the suffering earth. That's profound.

I look up and down the block I live on, and I don't weep. I should. We should be more like John and Jesus, moved with emotion for lost people.

Noah worked on the ark for 120 years and told the people in his neighborhood why it would soon be necessary. And they laughed him to scorn. They derided him as the village idiot. And then the tsunami came. I believe it was instant for those folks. Satan blinds the minds of unbelievers.

No one can be found to open the seals. And John weeps over the lost world held in torment by an evil usurper.

[W. A. Criswell years ago wrote a wonderful paragraph on this moment. He wrote this: "These represent the tears of all God's people through all the centuries. Those tears of the Apostle John are the tears of Adam and Eve driven out of the Garden of Eden as they bowed over the first grave, as they watered the dust of the ground with their tears over the silent, still form of their son Abel.

Those are the tears of the children of Israel in bondage as they cried unto God in their affliction and slavery. Those are the tears of God's elect

through the centuries as they cried unto heaven. They are the sobs and tears that had been wrung from the heart and soul of God's people as they looked on their silent dead, as they stand beside their open graves, as they experience the trials and sufferings of life, heartaches and disappointments indescribable.

Such is the curse that sin has laid on God's beautiful creation, and this is the damnation of the hand of him who holds it, that usurper, that interloper, that intruder, that alien, that stranger, that dragon, that serpent, that satan-devil." No wonder John wept audibly, for the failure to find a redeemer meant that this earth and its curse is consigned forever to death. It meant that death and sin and damnation and hell should reign forever and ever, and the sovereignty of God's earth should remain forever in the hands of Satan.] end quote

5 and one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals."

These are messianic titles. The ancient world needed no schooling on these two titles that refer to a coming messiah ruler. Listen to Jacob's blessing on his son Judah. From Genesis 49:

Genesis 49:9-10

Judah is a young lion—my son, you return from the prey. Like a lion he crouches and lies down; like a lioness, who dares to rouse him? / The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes and the allegiance of the nations is his.

Shiloh has come. The allegiance of the nations is going to be forcefully removed from Satan the usurper and given to Shiloh, Messiah, the Lion of the tribe of Judah will rule the nations.

the Root of David Messiah is in the lineage of David. Listen to Isaiah the prophet. Isaiah 11:

Isaiah 11:1

Then a shoot will spring up from the stump of Jesse, and a Branch from his roots will bear fruit.

Isaiah 11:10

On that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples. The nations will seek Him, and His place of rest will be glorious.

After the Babylonian captivity, when Judah returned to Israel, Israel was under continuous rule by it's occupiers. The medo persians. Then greece. Then Rome at the time Jesus was born.

We have 2 distinctly different geneologies for Jesus. One is Joseph's, who is not His physical father, but who is His earthly parent with Mary His mother.

Matthew's geneology not only leads to David the king, but Joseph, if Israel still had a succession of kings in David's line, Joseph was next in line to be king. He was royal in that sense, but not more than a humble carpenter when Mary gave birth to Jesus. That's why they had to travel to the City of David for the census that was ordered.

Luke gives us a geneology that leads us to Mary His mother. A daughter of David, in that same royal lineage.

He is the shoot from the stump of Jesse. I'm quite sure that the jews who hated Him knew these facts perfectly and used this truth to alarm Pilate, and to cause Pilate to look at Jesus as a threat. That's why Pilate asked Jesus if He was in fact a king. He is in the direct line of succession from King David. He is a royal in peasant robes.

It's interesting to me that there's nothing new under the sun. The jews for their own evil purposes deny Jesus place in the lineage of David and call Him a bastard child, and then when they want Pilate to murder Him they

affirm, Oh yes, He is a king.

Pilate had a sign made for the cross that Jesus died on. Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. He recognized Jesus royalty, and mocked it in a Roman show of force. This is what we do to your King's Judah.

5 and one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals."

I'm sure there was a victory whoop in hell when Jesus expired on that cross. Satan thought he had finished the battle with this challenging King of this world. Killed Him. Brushed the dust off of his hands and said, we did it, He's dead. Long live Satan, the king of this world.

But the elder who makes this statement that John records says; The Lion of Judah, the Root of Jesse has overcome.

John spins around in excitement and expectancy to see this Lion of Judah! This Root of Jesse.

6 And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain,

John spins to see this Lion but he instead see's a lamb. A perfect, unblemished, sacrificial lamb.

Remember John the baptist's words when he introduces Jesus at the Jordan river? *Jn. 1:29 Behold! The Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world.*

Satan thought he was victorious in the murder of the one who was challenging him for the role of ruler of this world. But God in His wisdom was sacrificing a sinless lamb who would forgive every sin of every man, woman, or child who believes and repents and asks for forgiveness.

He IS the Lion of Judah. He IS the root and lineage of David the king. He IS the spotless Lamb of God, Who died sacrificially, in my place, for my sins.

He is slain, yet standing. Did you get that. Slain but alive. God raised Him from the dead in complete victory over the sins of all who will receive Him as their Lord and Saviour. The death of This lamb satisfied God's wrath against my sins. That, beloved, is the good news.

I was a helpless bankrupt before God who was full of wrath over my debt and my sins. Jesus took my sins upon Himself, and He gave to me, His righteousness. He took my filthy rags to the cross, and He gave me fine linens, white and clean. I am dressed in His purity. I possess a righteousness, not my own. It is a righteousness imputed to me.

The Lion, the lineage of David, the sacrificial lamb who died in my place. All of it together in this scene in heaven. No human mind is capable of designing such an overwhelming deliverance of this whole fallen world. Only the mind of God could come up with this plan that is unfolding before our very eyes, as we meet, even this morning.

God is Sovereign over every headline. This world is perfectly on course for what we are witnessing together in this ancient book, this very morning. Go and tell your neighbors.