

The Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David Has Triumphed

5: 1-5

DIG: What do you think makes the scroll so significant? What dilemma does the sealed scroll pose? Why is Christ the only One worthy enough to open it (see John 1:29)? How are the two comings of Jesus symbolized in John's vision? What do the titles the Lion of the Tribe of Judah and the Root of David mean? Why was it necessary for one of the elders to comfort John, who already knew that Jesus had triumphed? How did this message comfort first-century believers?

REFLECT: Do you think Yeshua sees your tears? Do you think He cares? Do you think the Lord is working behind the scenes for your benefit? When all has seemed lost, has He ever taken action on your behalf? Is Jesus the Lion of the Tribe of David to you? Where does your hope rest today?

Chapter 4 honors **God the Father**. He is the One who sits on the throne in heaven, and is the ultimate source of authority and praise. In Chapter 5 the attention shifts from **God the Father** to **God the Son**. The Bible teaches us that when we honor **the Son** we honor **the Father**. **The Father** has given all authority to **His Son** (John 5:22). Scripture also teaches that **the heavenly Father** has given **the Son** a Kingdom, and it is **His** will that all creation, whether in heaven, on earth or under the earth, bow the knee to **Christ as Lord of lords and King of kings** (17:14, 19:16). This book is uniquely a revelation of **Yeshua**, demanding our absolute submission and praise. Thus, from Chapter 5 to Chapter 22 we are constantly reminded of who is in charge. **Jesus Christ** alone has the ability to control the future.

The scroll John saw was in **God's right hand**, with writing on both sides (5:1a). Being in **His right hand** indicates **His** authority and power. Whatever is in **the scroll** has been designed, planned, and will be executed from the will of **ADONAI**. It originated from **His right hand**. This scroll contains the title deed to the earth, which will be given to **God the Son**. Unlike other deeds, it will not give the details of *what Jesus* will inherit, but rather *how He* will regain **His** rightful inheritance. **He** will do so by means of **His** wrath poured out on the earth. But **the scroll** will not only judge those on **the earth**, it will also redeem, or buy **the earth** back, from Satan, his demons and his followers.

Later in the book **John** will symbolically **eat** this **scroll**. And when **he eats** it, it turns **as sweet as honey** to his taste, but it will turn his **stomach sour** (10:9-10). It tastes **sweet** because **John** wants **Jesus** to act in judgment and take back the **earth** that is rightfully **His**. But the realization of the terrible doom awaiting unbelievers turned that initial **sweet** taste into bitterness. Something similar happened in the book of **Ezekiel**. In his vision of heaven, **Ezekiel** said: **I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll, which God unrolled before me.** (Normally, scrolls were written only on one side. But like **John's** scroll, this scroll was written on both sides, and it contained words of lament and mourning and woe). And **God** said to **Ezekiel**, "Son of man, eat this scroll; then go back and speak to the house of Isra'el. So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. And it became as sweet as honey in my mouth (Ezekiel 2:9 to 3:3).¹⁶¹ The implication of it being written on both sides is that it points to the importance and the terrible nature of the events that are being recorded.

The book of **Zechariah** also gives us some insight as to *why* the terrible events of the Great Tribulation will take place (**Zechariah 5:1-4**). He also saw a scroll, a very large flying scroll, and like the two tablets of the Testimony (**Exodus 32:15**), it was written on both sides. And **God** said to **Zechariah**, "This is the curse that is going out over the whole earth; for according to what it says on one side, every thief will be banished." This refers to one of the first four commandments. "And according to what it says on the other, everyone who swears falsely will be banished," and this refers to one of the last six of the Ten Commandments. The curse of the scroll is directed against those who violate one of the commandments on each side of the two tablets - the eighth commandment against stealing on the back (**Exodus 20:15**) and the third commandment against swearing falsely by misusing the name of the LORD on the front (**Exodus 20:7**).¹⁶² The point is, the terrible events of the Great Tribulation will happen because of a total violation of **God's** moral standards that are revealed in the TaNaKh, beautifully displayed in **Christ** and constantly taught in the B'rit Chadashah.

This scroll was sealed with seven seals (5:1b). Sealing a scroll was a common and important practice in Biblical times. The wills of both Emperor Vespasian and Cesar Augustus, for example, were secured with seven seals. For such a document, a scribe would procure a long roll of parchment and begin writing. After a period of writing he would stop, roll the parchment just enough to cover his words. Then he would seal the scroll at that point with wax. Then he would resume writing, stop again, roll the scroll, and add another seal. By the time he was finished, he would have sealed the scroll seven times. Then the scroll is like a will, and would be read a section at a time, after each seal was opened.¹⁶³ The only one who could break the seals, was the one who would receive the inheritance after the death of the testator, or the one who made the will. In this case, the Messiah is both the testator and the one who will receive the inheritance.

Jeremiah 32:9-15 gives us a good picture of such a **scroll**. In the last days of the southern kingdom of **Judah**, just before the fall of Jerusalem, **Jeremiah's** cousin Hanamel needed help. He was desperate to sell a field he owned in **Jeremiah's** hometown of Anathoth, near Jerusalem. The Babylonian army was coming into the Land like a flood and once they conquered **Judah**, Hanamel's field would be worthless. But contrary to human wisdom, and in obedience to **God's** command, **Jeremiah** bought his cousin's field and **put the sealed** copy of **the scroll in a clay jar so it would last a long time** as a sign that the Babylonian captivity would not last forever (see my commentary on [Jeremiah Fs - Jeremiah Buys a Field](#)).

Who had the power to defeat the Devil and his demons, to do away with sin and to reverse the curse on all the earth? **And John saw a mighty angel**, Gabriel himself, shouting **in a loud voice**, "**Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?**" In answer to Gabriel's question there is only silence (since the **angel** is not named in scripture, it may be Gabriel because his name denotes **mighty**). The angels of heaven wait in silence. Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, **Job**, Moses, David, **Isaiah, Jeremiah, Dani'el**, the apostles and everyone from the Dispensation of Grace all stand in silence. After scouring every level of the universe, it seems like **no one in heaven (God's holy angels) or on earth (all of humanity) or under the earth (Satan and all of his fallen angels) could open the scroll or even look inside it (5:2-3)**.

Overwhelmed with grief and sadness **John wept and wept**, *literally kept on shedding many tears*, because **no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside it (5:4)**. **Wept** is from *klaio*, and is the same word used to describe **Jesus'** weeping over Jerusalem (**Luke 19:41**), and **Peter's** bitter weeping after betraying **Christ** three times (**Luke 22:62**). It is a word that expresses uncontrollable sobbing and heaving. **John** was broken hearted because unless that book can be opened there is no **hope**. There is only one **hope** for this world, **the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Yeshua the Messiah**. **He is the blessed hope (Titus 2:13)**. No one can help us but **Jesus**.

Interestingly enough, this is the only time we see **tears in heaven**. **John's tears** represent **the tears** of **God's** people throughout the ages. Those **tears** represent your **tears** and my **tears** as we experience the trials, the sufferings, the heartaches and indescribable disappointments of this life. Sometimes the pain is so great we don't know if we can go on. But the good news is that one-day **God** promises to **wipe away every tear from our eyes (7:17 and 21:4)**. In the midst of our pain, sometimes that promise is hard to imagine, but we continue to **hope in Him (Job 13:15)**. That is why **we wait for the blessed hope**.

But **ADONAI's** mercy and grace would never allow the world to drown in a sea of hopelessness. In the midst of **John's** despair, **YHVH** was about to take action. One of the **twenty-four elders** told **John** not to **weep**. Why was it necessary for one of the **elders** to comfort **John**, who already knew that **Jesus** had **triumphed**? Because **John** did that which we so easily do. **He** lost sight of the victory of the **Lamb**, which always results in hopelessness and **tears**. How very often do we sadden **Jesus** with our **weeping** and discouragement. We are often ready to give up in spite of the fact that **He** has already achieved the final victory.¹⁶⁴

Then **John's** attention was drawn to a new **Person** emerging at the throne of **God**. No human or angel can buy back the universe. But there is **One** who can. **He** is our **great God and Savior Jesus Christ** and here **He** is identified by the first of **His** two messianic titles. The elder said: **See, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed**. The title **the Lion of the Tribe of Judah** comes from Jacob's blessing. When Jacob was dying, he called his twelve sons around him, and prophesied to Leah's fourth born: **You are a lion's cub, O Judah . . . the scepter (or the right to rule) will not depart from Judah until He comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is His (Genesis 49:9-10)**. In **John's** day the Romans had destroyed Jerusalem, the heart of **Judah**, and the Jews were scattered throughout the world. **The scepter** had indeed departed from **Judah**, and the **One** to whom it belonged had already come, been rejected and crucified. **The Lord Jesus is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah**, but he is also **the Root of David (Isaiah 11:1 and 10)**. **Yeshua the Messiah** is in absolute control.

The title **the Root**, or descendant, of **David** comes from a prophecy in **Second Samuel 7:5-16**, the great chapter of **God's** covenant with **David**, where **ADONAI** said: **Your house and your kingdom will last forever before Me; your throne will be established forever**. At that time **ADONAI** promised King **David** that one of his descendants would be the **Messiah**. **Jesus** fulfilled that prophecy. **Jesus'** earthly mother was **Mary**, a descendant of **David** (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Ai - The Genealogies of Joseph and Mary**). Consequently, **Jesus** has the right to rule because **He** is the fulfillment of the prophecies made in the **TaNaKh**. All of those prophecies will be fulfilled at **Christ's** Second Coming when **He** establishes **His** millennial Kingdom.¹⁶⁵

Yeshua will be the only **One** worthy to open the scroll because **He** has triumphed. The scroll (or the will) was written in the name of **Christ**, since it is **His** inheritance. **He** is also the **One** who died, and because of the resurrection, thus **He** is the only **One** worthy to open **His** own scroll (or will). It is the most unusual will ever written because all of the inheritance goes to the one who died! In the **Greek** this word is in the aorist active tense and points to a once for all time victory. At the cross **He** triumphed over sin (**Romans 8:3**), death (**Hebrews 2:14-15**), and the forces of hell (**Colossians 2:15; First Peter 3:19**). For everyone born

of **God overcomes the world (First John 5:4)**, because **He has triumphed**. **John** stopped sobbing long enough to see **the Lion** prepare to **open the scroll and its seven seals (5:5)**. What excitement there will be as all of **heaven** holds its collective breath, waiting for **Jesus** to tear off **the seals, open the scroll** and take back what is rightfully **His**.

John was writing to first-century believers who were suffering greatly under persecution. Many had lost all their possessions and were being threatened with death if they did not renounce **the Lord**. The evil that confronted them seemed so vast that they undoubtedly were tempted to think that darkness would triumph.

We too can be tempted in this way when we are engulfed in suffering - whether it be because of disease, life's problems, moral sufferings, or the sinful state of our society. **John** may well have written to strengthen and encourage the believers of his age, but his words can speak to us also, giving us a firm foundation for our security and assurance. **ADONAI** is on our side. **God the Son has triumphed** over evil and has already paid for every sin you will ever commit past, present or future. That's why faith is so important. There is no **hope** except what **Christ** has *already* done. You need to believe in what **Yeshua** has *already* done for you, not believing what you can do for **Him**.

In **his** vision, **John** saw **Jesus** prepared to regain **His** rightful inheritance. Such a vision - and the truths that such a vision reveals - can give us great comfort and security. Every one of **God's** intentions toward us is for our good, not for evil. Every thought **He** has for us had to do with our blessing, our prosperity, and our growth in **His** holiness. At one time, it looked as if **no one** could **open the scroll** of **God's** plan to see it through to completion. But now, In **Yeshua the Messiah**, we can surrender ourselves into **His** hands and obey **Him**, knowing that **He** will never abandon or betray us.

*Lord, I surrender myself into **Your** hands. Cover me and all my family with **Your** infinite love, mercy, grace and power. **Father**, may **Your** Kingdom come and **Your** will be done in my heart and throughout **the earth**.¹⁶⁶*