

## THE BACKGROUND AND MEANING OF THE SEALED BOOK OF REVELATION 5

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The primary task of this study was to determine the background of the sealed book of Rev 5 and its meaning and significance in its literary context.

The historical survey shows that the interpretation of the sealed βιβλίον has undergone significant modifications in the course of time. The earliest documented patristic references to Rev 5:1-5 indicate that the early church most likely interpreted the sealed βιβλίον in the context of the exaltation of the resurrected Christ as the eschatological sovereign. From the third century on, however, numerous studies regarding the contents and meaning of the sealed βιβλίον led to increasingly diverse opinions rather than consensus. In spite of nearly eighteen hundred years of interpretative history, there is still an unanswered question pertaining to the role and meaning of the sealed βιβλίον in the context of the entire scene of Rev 5.

The philological and contextual analyses of the key terms and phrases occurring in Rev 5:1-5 and the investigation of the main motifs in Rev 4-5 indicate that the exaltation and enthronement of the resurrected Christ upon the throne of the universe at the right hand of the Father are the most likely ways in which first-century readers could understand the scene of Rev 5. Such an understanding was in full agreement with the core of their faith and expectation of the fulfillment of the OT promise with regard to the coming of the Messiah, the king of the Davidic lineage.

Finally, this study indicates that the OT coronation ceremony, wherein the Covenant Book—namely the book of Deuteronomy—was presented to a newly enthroned Israelite king (cf. Deut 17:18-20; 1 Kgs 11:12) symbolizing his right to rule, renders the most satisfactory background of the scene of Rev 4-5 and the function and meaning of the sealed βιβλίον therein. The Covenant Book, which with the downfall of the Israelite monarchy and the termination of the Davidic kingship became “sealed,” is transferred to Christ, the true Davidic king, to whom has been committed the lordship over the world. As the receiver, Christ imparts a part of the Father’s revelation to the Church with the purpose of instructing his people regarding “what must soon take place.”