

WORTHY IS THE LAMB WHO WAS SLAIN

Revelation 5

Introduction:

Welcome to those who are visiting with us this morning. We have been working our way through the book of Revelation. It has taken several weeks to get through the introduction in the first chapter and the messages to the seven churches in chapters 2-3. Last week we got a glimpse into heaven as we looked at chapter 4.

This morning we are moving on into chapter 5 of this amazing book of Revelation. However before we get into the text of this chapter, I would like to review a bit and speak to another important issue regarding the way we approach and interpret the book of Revelation.

Last week we talked about a number of differing views regarding the chronology of end-times events.

- A, post and pre-millennialism
- Pre, mid and post-tribulation rapture

We spoke about the importance of a literal interpretation of the Scriptures. When it comes to the events of the last days, we must believe that the Scriptures speak plainly. The words must be taken for what they plainly say in order for the Bible to make sense.

However, throughout the centuries, Bible scholars have taken a number of approaches to the interpretation of the book of Revelation. I will briefly outline four major views. (*David Levy & Probe Ministries*)

1. Preterist view – holds that this book is not speaking about things to come, but rather that John was writing about events of his day. Those holding this view believe that the prophecies of the Olivet discourse of Matthew 24 and Revelation were fulfilled in the first century with the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. Chapters 1-3 describe the conditions in the seven churches of Asia Minor prior to the Jewish war (AD 66-70). The remaining chapters of Revelation and Jesus' Olivet Discourse describe the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans.

2. Historical or historicist view – This view teaches that Revelation is a symbolic representation that presents the course of history from the apostle's life through the end of the age. The symbols in the apocalypse correspond to events in the history of Western Europe, including various popes, the Protestant Reformation, the French Revolution, and rulers such as Charlemagne.
3. Idealist view – this view interprets the book of Revelation allegorically. According to this view, the events of Revelation are not tied to specific historical events. The imagery of the book symbolically presents the ongoing struggle throughout the ages of God against Satan and good against evil. In this struggle, the saints are persecuted and martyred by the forces of evil but will one day receive their vindication. In the end, God is victorious, and His sovereignty is displayed throughout ages.
4. Futurist view (this is where I fall on this issue) – Futurists take a literal approach to interpreting the book of Revelation. The futurist view holds that the major portion of Revelation (ch. 4-22) describes prophetic events yet to be fulfilled. Futurists divide the book of Revelation into three sections as indicated in 1:19: "what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later." Chapter 1 describes the past ("what you have seen"), chapters 2-3 describe the present ("what is now"), and the rest of the book describes future events ("what will take place later").

So, we are now looking into the future events—"the things that must take place after this." Last week, in chapter 4, John gave us a glimpse of what it will be like when the church, the bride of Christ is caught up to glory and we gather with all the hosts of heaven around the throne of God to worship Him. It will be beyond our wildest imagination. As we bow before the King of the Ages, filled with wonder and amazement at His glory and majesty, we will cast our crowns at His feet, recognizes that it is He who is worthy of those crowns, not us.

Now we come to chapter 5. I would like to read this chapter for you, then we will look into it for just a few moments to see once again the wonder of worship in heaven.

Read Revelation chapter 5.

The theme of worthiness spills over into the scene we have before us in this chapter. But first, John was faced with a dilemma.

I. The Dilemma vv. 1-4

A. The Scroll

John's vision is now taken to something he notices in the right hand of the One seated on the throne. It was a scroll, written on both sides, rolled up and sealed with seven seals. MacArthur says,

"This is typical of various kinds of contracts in the ancient world, including deeds, marriage contracts, rental and lease agreements, and wills. The inside of the scroll contained all the details of the contract, and the outside—or back—contained a summary of the document. In this case it almost certainly is a deed—the title deed to the earth."

David Levy, in his commentary on Revelation adds to that. He says,

"Many believe that it represents Christ's title deed to the planet Earth. Although the last view is partially true, the scroll's contents represent much more...the scroll represents a history of the future. It reveals the judgments of God to be poured out on the earth, Christ's Second Coming to rightfully inherit and implement the title deed of redemption to planet Earth, and His righteous rule in the Millennial Kingdom."

So the scroll containing the future events of history is sealed, waiting to be opened, to unleash the final events of history. But there is something else...

B. The Voice

John hears a strong angel crying out, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" But no one could be found anywhere in all creation who was worthy to take control of the destiny of the earth. No one had the authority to break the seals and set plan into motion. This dilemma caused great sorrow in John and caused him to weep loudly.

Almost immediately one of the elders consoled John, saying that someone had been found to open the scroll. This announcement turned John's bitter sorrow into incredible joy.

II. The Solution vv. 5-7

The elder's description of this One who is worthy contains two important phrases:

- A. The Lion of the tribe of Judah – see Gen. 49:9-10. The lion is the king of the beasts. Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords. He is descended from the tribe of Judah.
- B. The Root of David – see Isaiah 11:1-5. David was the son of Jesse, and when God chose him as king over Israel, He promised him an eternal kingdom. The rest of the chapter goes on to describe life in the millennial kingdom under the rule of this one who comes from the line of King David.

This One, from the tribe of Judah, of the line of David, is of course, Jesus Christ, and he is the one who has the power and authority and is worthy to open the scroll containing the future judgments of God.

Hearing this John turns and sees, not a lion but a Lamb. *Read v. 6.* David Levy makes some good observations regarding the description we have here.

1. The Lamb is standing in "the midst of the throne" (v. 6). Christ has stepped down from His throne at the Father's right hand and moved in front of God the Father to receive the scroll (v. 7).
2. The Lamb looks as if it "had been slain" (v. 6), although it is still standing. Christ is often portrayed in the New Testament as a slain lamb (John 1:29; Acts 8:32; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Revelation 13:8) who still possesses the scars of His death (the crucifixion).
3. The Lamb has "seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth" (v. 6). This is a picture of Christ in the fullness of His omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. Twenty-eight times in the Book of the Revelation, Christ is referred to as a Lamb.

Christ, the One who is worthy, is pictured here as both a lion and a lamb. That may seem unusual, but it is an amazing picture of Jesus, the Messiah, the Promised One. He is both King and Savior. He is the Ruler and the Redeemer, and he has redeemed us by his own blood. He is the king of Kings, but he is also the sacrificial lamb.

And so, Christ steps forward to receive the scroll from the Father, for He alone is worthy to open its seals and set in motion the events of the end times, which until this point have been sealed up. He alone is worthy to open the scroll because he has paid the redemptive price to regain the title deed to the inheritance that was lost by Adam when he sinned in the Garden of Eden.

III. The New Song of the Redeemed vv. 8-14

Verses 8-14 give us another look into a glorious worship scene in heaven. As Christ, the Lamb steps forward and receives the scroll from the heavenly Father who is seated on the throne, the heavens once again break forth in exuberant praise and adoration. The living creatures and the elders again fall on the faces. This time it is not to worship the one who is on the throne, but rather they fall down before the Lamb.

There are a number of things about this scene that we could look at like the harps and bowls of incense. But what I want to focus on here is the song that is sung by the elders as they worship the Lamb of God. The Scriptures call it a new song. It is a song of redemption.

Read the song in vv. 9-10. He is worthy. He is worthy because he has paid the price to redeem for himself a people from every tribe and nation.

As this song of redemption swells through the heavens, John sees the vision expanding. No longer is it just the 24 elders representing the redeemed saints, and the four living creatures representing the angelic realm. Look at v. 11. *Read it.* Now he sees multiplied millions of angelic beings all crying out in worship. And what are they saying? *Read v. 12.* It is a sevenfold expression of praise and worship to the Lamb, who was slain for the salvation of mankind. He is worthy to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!

As David Levy says in his book, "This doxology recognizes the infinite, incalculable, and intrinsic power that Christ eternally possesses in Himself."

But then the vision expands even more. As the worship of the angels swells and fills the heavens, John sees and hears all created life breaking out in worship to the Creator and Redeemer. *Read v. 13-14.*

In response to the glorious worship of the Lamb, the four living creatures speak again, "Amen" – let it be so, it's true. And at this the elders fall down once again in worship of the Lamb.

Conclusion

As we wrap this up, I want to draw your attention back to the passage of Scripture we read earlier in the service. Philippians 2:5-11- we often look at this passage in the context of Christ's humiliation. He left the glory of heaven to taken on humanity in order to suffer and die for us.

But there is another part to that passage—Christ's exaltation. "Therefore (because of his willingness to humble himself) God has highly exalted him..."

There is coming a day when every knee will bow before Jesus Christ and every tongue will confess that He is Lord. Even the demonic world and all those who rejected Him and opposed Him will be forced to bow before Him and acknowledge that He is indeed the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

But for those who rejected Him, they will face Him as the one who will judge their sin and condemn them to everlasting punishment. How much better to be among those who willingly bow in worship, lifting redeemed hands and voices to praise and glorify the Lamb who was slain.

Wouldn't you rather be a part of that multitude falling in worship before the Lamb, than to be forced to acknowledge that Jesus is Lord when brought before him in judgment?