

THE LION WHO IS A LAMB

Introduction

1. Ray Summers suggested that chapter 4 of Revelation could be titled, “Believe in God;” while chapter 5 could be called, “Believe also in me” (cf. John 14:1).
2. Chapter 4 emphasized that God is on His throne – still reigning and ruling over the world no matter how dire things looked for the church.
3. Chapter 5 focuses upon Jesus as assurance of God’s faithfulness and man’s victory.
4. Still in the throne room of Heaven, John is introduced to the Lion who is a Lamb.

I. Who Is Worthy?

(5:1-4)

- A. First, John saw a scroll held in the right hand of God on His throne.
 1. The modern idea of a book – pages bound together, usually within a cover – did not come into existence until about the 4th century.
 2. Thus, what John saw was a scroll.
 3. This scroll was a complete record, for there was writing on the front and back of the parchment (cf. Ezekiel 2:9-10).
 4. Obviously, the scroll contained the record of the “things which must be hereafter” that John had been chosen to learn (4:1).
- B. However, this scroll was sealed with seven seals.
 1. The seal was melted wax into which an insignia was pressed.
 2. “The seal verified ownership, assured genuineness, and protected the contents” (Hutton).
 3. It was perfectly sealed, indicated by the number seven.
 4. Thus, the sealing of this book symbolized that it was the authoritative Word of God, though it was not yet revealed (cf. Isaiah 8:16; 29:11; Daniel 8:26; 12:4-9).
 5. This scroll contained the truths to be revealed to John; thus, it served as a complete record of God’s plan to redeem man and give him victory over sin and death.
- C. As John looked, a strong angel with a loud voice asked a crucial question: “Who is worthy to open the book and loose its seals?”
 1. To open the book meant to expose its contents to John and the world.
 2. Who is worthy to reveal the Word of God and execute His purposes?
- D. As the cry of the angel echoed away into silence, the answer was clear – no man or angel was worthy.
- E. John wept (and continued to weep) because this meant that the revelation needed by the church would remain unknown by man.
 1. Does it make us weep to think of those who have never heard the Word of God?
 2. One asked, “How can we be ‘a dry-eyed church in a hell-bound world?’” (cf. Joel 2:12; Mark 14:72; Philippians 3:18).

II. The Lamb Is Worthy

(5:5-14)

- A. John was soon comforted because one of the elders informed him that there was someone who could open the book.

The Book of Revelation

Lesson Twelve

Revelation 5:1-14

1. Jesus was able to open the seals for He had prevailed (conquered, overcome).
2. This is the same word used for the promises to those who overcome in chapters 2 and 3.
- B. He is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David.
 1. This refers to Jacob's prophecy about Judah (Genesis 49:9-10; Hebrews 7:14).
 2. It symbolizes the strength and power of Jesus (cf. Matthew 12:29; 2 Timothy 1:10; 1 Corinthians 15:55-57; etc.).
 3. As the Root of David, Jesus descended directly from Israel's greatest king (cf. 2 Samuel 7:11-14; Psalm 89:3ff; Isaiah 11:1-10).
- C. Yet when John looked to see this Lion, he saw a Lamb instead.
 1. He saw not just a Lamb, but one that had the appearance of having been slain (slaughtered, butchered).
 2. Clearly, this is a reference to Jesus (13:8; Isaiah 53:7; John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32-33; 1 Peter 1:19).
 3. Even though it had been slain, the Lamb was standing – indicating the resurrection from the dead.
 4. The seven horns symbolized His omnipotence – perfect power and authority (cf. 1 Samuel 2:10; Micah 4:13; Habakkuk 3:4; Luke 1:69).
 5. The seven eyes symbolized His omniscience – manifested through the Holy Spirit (cf. Colossians 2:3; 2 Chronicles 16:9; John 16:13).
 6. "All the earth" represents His omnipresence.
- D. Jesus reigns as a Lion because He was submissive as a sacrificial Lamb.
- E. Thus, Jesus is worthy to take and open the scroll in God's hand.
- F. When He took the book from God, the living creatures and the elders worshipped Him.
 1. The harp symbolized praise (14:2; 15:2).
 2. The incense symbolized prayer (8:3-4; Psalm 141:2; Luke 1:10).
 3. The new song is one of gratitude for what has been accomplished by the Lamb (14:3-4; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
 4. Through His death, He has redeemed men from all nations that they might become a kingdom of priests (cf. Daniel 2:44; 7:13-14).
 5. As Christ reigns, they reign with Him – though upon the earth – in victory over Satan, sin, and persecution.
- G. The innumerable host of angels also worships Him as a Lamb who is worthy (cf. 4:11; 7:11).
- H. Finally, all creation joins in praising both God on the throne and the Lamb who is worthy (cf. Psalm 148).
- I. The only thing to be said is, "Amen."
- J. God is worthy of worship!

Conclusion: *Behold the Lamb!*

1. The Slain Lamb (vs. 9)
2. The Standing Lamb (vs. 5)
3. The Special Lamb (vs. 12-13)

WORTHY IS THE LAMB!

- I. The Lamb
 - A. The fact that a lamb is a primary symbol of Jesus and Christianity demonstrates that God was the author of Scripture.
 1. Men tend to choose powerful or vicious animals to represent their nation, team, or cause.
 2. There is a legend that Ben Franklin thought the turkey was a better symbol for America than the eagle.¹
 - a. In fact, Franklin seems to have been criticizing the Society of Cincinnati, whose symbol was also an eagle.
 - b. Franklin's design for the Great Seal was an image of Moses closing the waters of the Red Sea upon Pharaoh's army.
 3. Yet God chose a lamb – the most gentle and defenseless animal – to represent His only-begotten Son, Who is also a lion!
 - B. The Lamb appeared slain because Jesus willingly gave Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.
 - C. Yet the Lamb was standing (literally, stood and remained standing), symbolizing Jesus' resurrection from the dead, never to die again.
 - D. Notice the cooperation of the Godhead in this passage:
 1. Jesus is the Lamb.
 2. The Father is on the throne, from whose right hand Jesus takes the scroll.
 3. The Holy Spirit is symbolized by seven eyes (omniscience) sent into the world to see all and to reveal all Truth.
- II. Worthy
 - A. The idea of worthiness in this passage refers to the spiritual qualifications necessary to open the scroll.
 - B. Because the writing in the scroll dealt with things to come (4:1), only God could open it – for He alone can foretell the future.
 1. Thus, this passage declares the deity of Jesus.
 2. He is eternal; He knows the future; and He is worthy of worship!
 - C. Jesus possessed the regal authority and victorious power necessary.

¹ “For my own part I wish the Bald Eagle had not been chosen as the Representative of our Country. He is a Bird of bad moral Character. He does not get his Living honestly. You may have seen him perched on some dead Tree near the River, where, too lazy to fish for himself, he watches the Labour of the Fishing Hawk; and when that diligent Bird has at length taken a Fish, and is bearing it to his Nest for the Support of his Mate and young Ones, the Bald Eagle pursues him and takes it from him.

With all this injustice, he is never in good case but like those among men who live by sharpening & robbing he is generally poor and often very lousy. Besides he is a rank coward: The little King Bird not bigger than a Sparrow attacks him boldly and drives him out of the district. He is therefore by no means a proper emblem for the brave and honest Cincinnati of America who have driven all the King birds from our country...

“I am on this account not displeased that the Figure is not known as a Bald Eagle, but looks more like a Turkey. For the Truth the Turkey is in Comparison a much more respectable Bird, and withal a true original Native of America... He is besides, though a little vain & silly, a Bird of Courage, and would not hesitate to attack a Grenadier of the British Guards who should presume to invade his Farm Yard with a red Coat on.” – **Benjamin Franklin, letter to his daughter, Sarah, 1784**

The Book of Revelation

Lesson Twelve

Revelation 5:1-14

III. Worthy Is the Lamb!

- A. Note the emphasis that no one was worthy – man is hopeless without Jesus.
- B. It might be helpful to think of this passage in terms of the coronation of Jesus.
 - 1. Jesus came into the world to die for sin (Hebrews 2:9).
 - 2. Because of this, God exalted Him above all others (Philippians 2:5-11).
 - 3. This exaltation took place at His ascension back to Heaven and the right hand of God (Daniel 7:13-14; Psalm 24:7-10).
 - 4. This is where Jesus remains today – at the right hand of God (Psalm 110; Hebrews 10:11-13).
 - 5. Thus, He reigns over His kingdom (Ephesians 1:20-23) and makes salvation available (Hebrews 4:14-16).
- C. It is in this capacity (as King of kings) that Jesus is able to take the scroll and reveal its contents.
 - 1. On the Day of Pentecost, Jesus began to make His covenant known through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33).
 - 2. The scroll in this passage may represent the final part of God's revelation to man (the end of the book of Revelation).
- D. When Jesus takes the scroll, He is praised by all creation for He is indeed worthy!

Conclusion: Colossians 3:1-2 – *Look up!*

- 1. To see God on the throne (Ch. 4)
- 2. To see Jesus as the resurrected Lamb
- 3. To see Jesus as the victorious Lion
- 4. To see Jesus at the right hand of God
- 5. To see victory over suffering
- 6. To see the beauty of worship
- 7. To see the promise of prayer
- 8. To see the reign of the Christian
- 9. To see life eternal