

“Worthy Is The Lamb” (Revelation 5:1-14)

Introduction

When I was in graduate school at the University of Texas at Arlington, I encountered a kaleidoscope of worldviews and perspectives on life. There were: 1) persons like myself, Bible-believing, evangelical Christians who operated out of a supernatural worldview. 2) There were others who saw themselves as neo-orthodox Christians. They did not believe the Bible is the Word of God but that the Bible can become the Word of God to you in a personal encounter and experience. 3) Others referred to themselves as liberal Christians. They were skeptical, at best, concerning the supernatural parts of the Bible, but they were fond of the moral teachings of the Bible, especially passages like the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). It could be said that they tended toward the view that the Bible contains the Word of God. 4) Still others approached life from a non-Christian perspective altogether. At the University there were Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims. There were cultists, occultists and New Agers. 5) There were also agnostics and atheists, and many of my professors fell into this last category.

I remember on one occasion one of my classmates asking an atheist professor a very important question. She asked, “What do you believe the future holds for mankind?” His answer was quick, forthright, and surprising. “I’m not very optimistic,” he said. “When I look at history I discover man has not treated man very well. When I look at the contemporary world I discover not much has changed. I’m not very hopeful about the future.” He concluded by saying, “I believe the future holds for mankind certain destruction and potential annihilation. I have no reason to be encouraged about the future.” In a related vein, the German liberal Rudolf Bultmann said, “We cannot claim to know the end and goal of history. Therefore, the question of meaning in history has become meaningless.”

If I held to the same worldview as my atheist professor, I would agree with his prediction 100%. If man can hope only in himself, and if man must save himself as both Humanist Manifesto I and II affirm, then I too believe the future holds for humanity certain destruction and potential annihilation. But you see that is where Revelation 5 enters the scene, with a word of hope and certainty. I might summarize that the theme of this chapter is captured by the words of a little rhyme I was taught as a little boy in my Baptist Church in Atlanta, Ga. “He [speaking of God] has got the whole world in His hands!” This world is not out of control rushing headlong toward destruction and annihilation. All things are under the sovereign and secure control of our great God because ... in heaven ... God’s Lamb sits upon the throne and, the Lamb is worthy.



Transition

Revelation 5 teaches us the Lamb of God is in control and the Lamb of God is worthy. Three reasons in particular are noted and developed in this 5th chapter. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, is worthy because:

I. Jesus Christ is the Lord of history. 5:1-5

Revelation 4 and 5 is one vision of 2 parts. Revelation 4 focuses on God the Father and Creation. Revelation 5 focuses on God the Son and Redemption. By creation and redemption God has the right to do with the world as He wills. God the Son, in particular, is active in bringing history to its appropriate climax and consummation.

1. He is the Lord because of God's plan. 5:1

Throne – place of authority, mentioned over 40 times in Revelation (Revelation is a throne book).

Right Hand – hand of authority.

Scroll – mentioned 8 times in chapter 5, written inside and on the back – it is filled with information called an “opisthograph.”

Sealed with seven seals – it is perfectly or completely sealed up.

* What is the scroll? 1) The title deed to the earth; 2) Last will and testament (Roman model) 3) Ezekiel's book of woe and lamentation (Ezk. 2:9-10); 4) The sealed book of Daniel 12:4ff. What was denied Daniel is now revealed to John. It is the remainder of the Revelation (chapters 6-19). It is a book of retribution, redemption and restoration.

1) Retribution – Judgment of the seals (chapter 6), trumpets (chapters 8 & 9), and the bowls (chapters 15 & 16) on a world that has said no to God's Lordship.

2) Redemption – Note chapter 7! 1) God is not through with the Jew (cf. Rom. 11:25ff; Zech. 12:10). Further, note the multitude of Gentiles in 7:9-17. There is a silver lining of redemption laced against the backdrop of the storm clouds of judgment.

3) Restoration – Chapters 21 – 22, New Heaven, Earth, Jerusalem; note especially 21:4-5!

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He is the Lord because of God's plan.

2. He is the Lord because of heaven's problem. 5:2-4

Note – mighty angel, loud voice, proclaiming (continually heralding) and the key word worthy (4 times).

Note – no one – not Moses or Joshua, Elijah or Elisha, Jeremiah or Daniel, Peter or Paul! The emphasis is on the universal search; not intending to make a cosmological statement. It is a common or conventional way to denote all of creation.

I wept much (imperf. tense) – for a brief moment it looks as if God’s plan for the end of history and the consummation of the ages will be thwarted and not come to fruition. The universal search turned up no one! One must be found who is worthy, and there is only one who is. God’s vindication, the saints glorification and heaven’s anticipation all ride on the shoulders of the Lamb.

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Jesus is Lord because of heaven’s problem.

3. He is the Lord because of His power. 5:5

(cf. Gen. 49:10; Isa. 11:1, 10)

Elders, cf. 4:4, representative of the redeemed of all the ages.

Do not weep (*me* with the pre. imp.) – stop weeping, crying, wailing

The Lion of the tribe of Judah – Gen. 49:10; Messiah will come from Judah.

Lion – strength, majesty, a king.

The Root of David – Isa. 11:1, 10; (cf. 22:16). Messiah will come from

David. Root of David – source of all Messianic blessings.

Has prevailed – (*nikeo* ; aor. tense), conquered, overcome, triumphed, won the victory once and for all. As the lion He is the strength of our salvation, as the

Root of David, He is the source of our salvation.

II. **Jesus Christ is the Lord of victory. 5:6-7**

When we come to verse 5 we encounter an enigma as the drama of redemption is played out in glorious and majestic imagery. We are unprepared for what we see. In verse 4 we are told to look for a lion, the Root of David. Instead we read ...

4 living creatures – angelic beings of worship introduced in chapter 4.

Elders – 24, introduced also in chapter 4. Again, they represent the redeemed of all the ages.

Stood (perf. ten.) ... slain (perf. ten.); meaning to slay or cut the throat.

1. He is victorious because He was slain. 5:6

Lamb (*arnios*) – a special word for lamb, used 29 times in Revelation, and only 1 time outside in John 21:15. The word means a little pet lamb, kept 4 days in the house before the Passover sacrifice, but is used also of the victorious “warrior lamb,” Jesus Christ. The word again occurs 29 times in Revelation; 28 times it is clearly in reference to Jesus.

*The exception: Rev. 13:11 and the false prophet

1) He looks like a friend.

2) He speaks the message of the dragon (Satan).

*The theme of the lamb is prominent in Scripture.

The lamb motif is one rich in the history of salvation.

Gen. 22:8 Abraham and Isaac “**God will provide** for himself the lamb . . .”

Ex. 12 The Passover 12:5 “your lamb shall be **without blemish.**”

Is. 53 Servant of the Lord 53:7 “He was led as a lamb to **the slaughter.**”

John 1:29 “behold the Lamb of God who takes away the **sin of the world.**”

I Enoch 90 and the testament of Joseph (a horned “warrior” lamb)



Transition

He is victorious because He was slain.

2. He is victorious because He is standing. 5:6
Stood (perfect tense) – He began to stand at a point and time in history and He continues to stand. In the center of the throne stands the living, resurrected Jesus! The resurrection is no myth, fable, legend or lie. He is alive, bearing the marks of His perfect sacrifice.
3. He is victorious because He is strong. 5:6
Seven – perfect, complete
Horns – strength, power
 *He has perfect power, He is omnipotent.
4. He is victorious because He is searching. 5:6
Seven – perfect, complete
Eyes – knowledge; He has perfect knowledge; He is omniscient.
Seven – perfect, complete
Spirits of God – there is only 1 Holy Spirit
 *He is, through the perfect Holy Spirit, present in all the earth. He is omnipresent.
 *If all I had was Revelation 5:6, I would know the Lamb, He is God!
5. He is victorious because He is sovereign. 5:7
Came (aorist) took (dramatic perfect) the scroll ...

God's Perfect Lamb
 "Mary had a little lamb,
 His soul was white as snow.
 And anywhere His Father sent,
 the Lamb was sure to go.
 He came to earth to die one day,
 the sin of man to atone.
 And now He reigns in heaven above,
 He's the Lamb upon the Throne."

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Jesus Christ is the Lord of victory.

III. Jesus Christ is the Lord of glory. 5:8-14

Verses 8 – 14 introduce us to 3 beautiful hymns sung in heaven. The first song is the longest, the second shorter, and the third shortest of all. Yet in reverse order, the first choir is the smallest, the second somewhat larger, and the third the largest of all. In heaven, who sings and what do they sing about the Lamb?

1. He is praised by the saints. 5:8-10

(Learn from the redeemed.)

Harp – instrument of praise

Golden Bowls – intercession of the saints, a major theme in Revelation
 (cf. 11:17, 18; 13:7, 9, 10; 14:12; 16:6; 17:6; 18:20, 24; 19:8; 20:9)

We have praise and prayer.

New – (*kainen*) new in kind or quality, for a new day of salvation as dawned through the Lamb.

He is worthy for 4 reasons in verses 9 & 10:

- 1) Slain – this word is used only in Revelation! (cf. Isa. 53:7)
- 2) Redeemed – purchased us by: gold, silver, or precious stones? No!
 How? By your blood. The redeeming blood of the Lamb is no
 embarrassments in heaven. He redeemed us from everywhere. No one is
 excluded from the cross! All barriers are broken down.
- 3) Made us kings (we reign) and priest (we serve).
- 4) Will reign on the earth (cf. Rev. 20:4-6) – looks to the millennial kingdom.

2. He is praised by the angels. 5:11-12

(Learn from the heavenly spirits.)

Ten thousand times ten thousand is literally “myriads of myriads.” The
 number cannot be calculated.

*No angel worship! Don't worship them, watch them! Don't honor them,
listen to them!

Verse 12 is a 7-fold blessing.

*Note blessing (*eulogia*) – literally a “good word.”

*We cannot give him the first 4, but we can give him the last 3!

3. He is praised by all creation. 5:13-14
(Learn from God's creatures.)

Redemption should draw all of creation into a oneness of worship and praise of the one who is worthy.

Verse 13 is doxological not cosmological. A.T. Roberson called these "the 4 great fields of life."

On the throne (God the Father, God of creation, chapter 4)

To the Lamb (God the Son, God of redemption, chapter 5)

Verse 14 Amen! So be it!

Conclusion

If the governor walks in, it is appropriate to stand.

If the president walks in, it is appropriate to stand and applaud.

But if Jesus, the Lamb, walks in, to stand is inadequate, to applaud is arrogant. The only proper response to who He is and what He has done is to fall down and worship!!! The Lamb is Lord in heaven. Is He Lord in your heart?