



**Sunday School Lesson Summary for April 22, 2007
Released on Wednesday, April 18, 2007**

"Christ Is Worthy to Redeem!"

**DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 107:1-9.
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Revelation 5.
PRINTED TEXT: Revelation 5:1-5, 11-14.
READ: Revelation 5:1-14.**

**TIME: about A.D. 96
PLACE: from Patmos**

Revelation 5:1-5, 11-14

1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back side, sealed with seven seals.

2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

.....

11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.

13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I

saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

TODAY'S AIM

Facts: to see how Christ will be able to open the scroll of judgment in heaven and receive universal adoration.

Principle: to realize that the aspiration of all faithful believers must focus on the Lamb of God.

Application: to urge people to accept judgment on their sins and then receive redemption from Christ so that they can reign with Him.

HOW TO SAY IT

ANTIPAS. *An-tih-pus.*

DOMITIAN. *Duh-mish-un.*

Lesson Background

Last week's lesson looked at the opening scene of John's vision of Heaven. We found a breath-taking tableau of worship before the throne of God, led by the 4 creatures that attend the throne. The worship was joined by 24 honored elders. Study of this scene allowed us to understand the heart of true worship. This week's lesson continues in that vein, but worship has ceased temporarily. The reasons for its pause and for its resumption are key elements of Revelation 5.

A central item in this chapter is a certain scroll (compare Isaiah 29:11). This scroll represents the mystery of God's gracious salvation and of His judgmental wrath. The scroll is closed by seven seals.

The breaking of each seal in the following chapters brings about symbolic events tied to the grim judgments of God. While the images are terrifying, we who are in Christ can rest assured that God's punishing anger will not be visited upon us. Our names are written in the Lamb's book of life. We have overcome by the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 12:11).

Lamb Revealed in Heaven (Revelation 5:1-5)

1. What is the significance of the "right hand" (Revelation 5:1)?

What was unveiled in Revelation 5 is a continuation of what began in chapter 4. "A door was opened in heaven" (v. 1), and John was invited to come up and see things that were yet to come. Surrounding the throne of God were the twenty-four elders (v. 4) and the four living creatures (v. 6), who were involved in ceaseless praise of the Almighty.

John saw that in the right hand of God there was a book (5:1). The right hand was often used in performing oaths; so this is the likely reason for the book being in the "right hand" (cf. 1:16-17; 10:5-6).

John's vision is quite similar to one given to Ezekiel: "When I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; and he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe" (Ezek. 2:9-10).

That the scrolls given to Ezekiel and John were written upon on both sides is significant. "The fact that it was covered on both sides with writing indicates that it was filled with meaning and importance." (Summers, *Worthy Is the Lamb*, Broadman).

"John could see writing on both sides of the scroll, which meant that nothing more could be added. What was written was complete and final.

2. Describe the "book" seen by John. What do the seven seals indicate?

The book (or scroll) that John saw was sealed with seven seals. The *seven seals* give a high sense of the importance to the scroll's contents. The book of Revelation uses the number *seven* 55 times. Seven is this book's number for perfection. The number *seven* here tells us that the scroll contains the perfect message of God. It awaits its revelation to John and the rest of the heavenly audience.

3. Do we know who the "strong angel" (v. 2) was? What does Scripture teach about angels?

While some have suggested that the "strong angel" was Gabriel, no indication is given concerning the identity of this angel. That he was "strong" implies that there are ranks and varieties of angels, which can be inferred from other texts as well (Gen. 3:24; Job 1:6; Isa. 6:1-2; Ezek. 28:13-15; Dan. 10:13; Matt. 18:10; Jude 1:9). This strong angel will be seen again in Revelation—first as the one who bore the little book (10:1-2) and then as the one who cast a great millstone into the sea (18:21). In these latter passages he is called a "mighty angel," but the Greek word for "mighty" is the same word that is translated "great" in Revelation 5:2.

The great angel asked a question: "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" (v. 2). It should be noted that when the seals are broken (6:1-17; 8:1-6), judgments such as had never been seen before are unleashed upon the earth in that time designated as the "great tribulation" (7:14). As Christ said, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matt. 24:21).

The question "Who is worthy?" could be understood in the sense of "Who is able?" "The vision assumes that he who opens the scroll has power to execute what is written therein" (Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, Eerdmans).

The book (or scroll) cannot be opened without breaking *the seals*. The seal on government correspondence in the ancient world is more than a way of keeping the document closed. The nature of the seal determines who has the authority to break it and read the document. For example, a document sealed with the emperor's imprint can be viewed only by an official of the highest level (compare Esther 3:12; 8:10).

The one who opens it must have the proper authority—that is, must be found *worthy*.

4. Why was John weeping (vs. 3,4)?

The explanation that no one in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth was able to open the scroll was a way of saying that neither angels, nor living persons, nor departed spirits

were either worthy or capable of opening the sealed scroll. They were therefore unworthy to look upon the contents of the book, thus preventing John from knowing its contents.

At this the Apostle John "wept much"; that is, he began shedding many tears. To have been called to heaven only to be disappointed because the future could not be revealed was difficult for John to accept. "Unless the seals are broken and the scroll of destiny unrolled, God's plan for the universe will be frustrated. Hence the Seer breaks out in unrestrained weeping. He wept at the prospect of an indefinite postponement of God's final and decisive action" (Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, Eerdmans).

"The question was, 'Who is *worthy*?' Who is worthy to rule the world and complete God's purpose for the human race? . . . But no one was found. *Not Enoch*, who had walked so closely with God that one day he walked right into heaven. *Not Abraham*, whom God called His friend... . *Not Moses*, the meekest man in all the earth. . . . *Not David*, the man after God's own heart. *Not Solomon*, the wisest man in all the world. . . . *Not Mary*, the mother of Jesus. *Not Peter*, who led three thousand people in one day to respond to the gospel. . . . *Not Paul*, the greatest evangelist of all time. . . . Not even *John*, who was recording this vision" (Lotz, *The Vision of His Glory*, Word).

5. In what ways could an observer tell by your actions that your heart has ached because God's plans were seemingly thwarted and that He was not being glorified as He deserves?

John was moved to tears because the scroll could not be opened. He was upset that God's plan and purposes seemingly could not proceed. People reveal their spiritual maturity by the things that they allow to upset them. Some are distraught that their church is not giving to them what they want in terms of preferred music, worship times, décor, etc. Others become upset with God when He does not answer their prayers the way they desire (see James 4:1-3).

Such concerns are quite shallow in contrast with John's reaction! John was upset because God was not going to be glorified since (apparently) His plan could not proceed as planned. A Christian who is deeply saddened because God is not being honored is a person who is more likely to work hard to fulfill God's purposes on this earth.

6. Why was Christ called the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Root of David (v. 5)?

Approached by one of the twenty-four elders, John was told, "Weep not," or perhaps, "Stop weeping." Indeed, there was no reason to weep, for one came forward who was worthy to open the sealed scroll, namely, the "Lion of the tribe of Judah."

This term harks back to Genesis 49:9, where Judah was called a "lion's whelp" (the birth, or young of any of various canine.) Heb. 7:14, "For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah". Likewise, "the sceptre shall not depart from Judah" (v. 10), indicating that this tribe would supply royalty to the nation of Israel and, ultimately, the true King of Israel, Jesus Christ. "He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:33). Since the lion has long been recognized as the king of beasts, it is appropriate that the King of kings (Rev. 19:16) is depicted as a lion.

Another figure drawn from the Old Testament is the "Root of David" (5:5). Isaiah 11:1 says, "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots."

Sometimes the Old Testament prophets refer to the Messiah as the branch of David who originates from David's dynasty (see Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15). This was true of the earthly Jesus, a rightful descendant of David (Matthew 1:1).

But in His eternal fullness, the Messiah is not derivative of the house of David. Rather, just the reverse is true: that house is dependent upon Him. The preexistent Christ is the source of the promise to David. This was taught by Jesus when He pointed out that David prophetically referred to the Messiah as "my Lord" (Luke 20:41-44).

It is therefore quite clear that the allusion to the Lion of Judah and Root of David in the Apocalypse is a reference to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He alone was successful in opening the sealed scroll, for He alone is worthy to do so.

"Christ has conquered once and for all. Paradoxically, this decisive victory over Satan and death was accomplished on the cross. He conquered by an act of total self-sacrifice. The result is that he alone is worthy to open the scroll of destiny both to reveal and carry out the final dissolution of all forces set in opposition to the eternal kingdom of God" (Mounce).

Slain Lamb (Rev. 5:6-11).

In verse 6 we discover that the One previously described as a Lion is now "a Lamb as it had been slain." Even so, the Lamb "stood." Obviously, slain lambs do not stand, but this Lamb is God's Son, who conquered death three days after being slain. "Christ, the Lamb, bears the marks of His death (see Luke 24:40; John 20:20, 27) even in His glorified state" (Ryrie, ed., *Ryrie Study Bible*, Moody).

Having taken the scroll from the hand of God (v. 7), "the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb" (v. 8) and sang a new song in praise to the Redeemer. Through Christ's shed blood, those "of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (v. 9) were able to receive the forgiveness of sins and be made "kings and priests" (v. 10). The gospel is for "all nations" (Luke 24:47), for "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34) and offers salvation to all.

Lamb Worshiped in Heaven (Revelation 5:11-14)

7. What is the significance of "ten thousand times ten thousand" (vs. 11,12) angels?

Joining in with the adoration of the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures was the "voice of many angels round about the throne" (Rev. 5:11). "[John's] same eyes that had seen Jesus spat upon, slapped, scourged, stripped, and crucified were now the eyes that were seeing millions of angels encircling the throne of the King of kings in adoration and worship. The same ears that had heard Jesus blasphemed, falsely accused, mocked, and convicted of blasphemy were now the ears that heard the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders join the millions of angels in thunderous praise of the Lamb who alone, is worthy!" (Lotz).

The word translated "ten thousand" is the Greek *muriades*, which is where we get the English "myriad." This term was frequently used by the Greeks to represent a number beyond human comprehension.

Considering the great number surrounding the throne of God, we can understand why their chant was in a "loud voice" (v. 12). Because the Lamb was willing to come to earth and die for sinful humanity, all heaven praised His sacrifice. He alone was worthy to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing. "All these are intrinsic qualities of Christ, except the last, which is the expression of the creatures' worship" (Barker and Kohlenberger, eds., *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Zondervan).

8. Who else joined in with praise to God and the Lamb (vs. 13,14)?

The worship chorus is now joined by *every creature*. The celebration is so great that even *heaven* cannot contain it! Joining the heavenly chorus in praise to the Lamb

of God, "every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea" (v. 13) renders his adoration to the heavenly Father and the Lamb. Just as God had received praise as Creator in the preceding chapter (4:11), now He receives praise as Redeemer.

As modern Christians, we must admit that we all have our preferences with regard to music and worship styles. We should nevertheless examine all Christian music in light of its intended purposes: to aid us in worshiping our Creator and Redeemer (Heb. 2:12), and to teach and admonish one another as believers (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

We note that this praise was being rendered "for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:13). Eternity will not be long enough to praise God, from whom all blessings flow, not the least of which is eternal salvation through the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

As Revelation 5 closes, "the four cherubim were constantly saying 'Amen.' After every ascription of praise by the rest of the universe, these four living ones say 'Amen.' They place the seal of their, and God's, approval upon this universal adoration. Also the elders fell down and worshiped, rendering divine homage not only to the triune God but also specifically to the Lamb. Most glorious antiphony!" (Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors*, Baker).

Once the heavenly vision of God's throne has concluded in Revelation 4 and 5, everything is set for what was to follow, namely, the opening of the seven seals. "These two chapters reveal the indescribable glory and infinite majesty of the Godhead in heaven. The following chapters reveal the sovereign power of God expressed in judgment on a wicked world sunk in unprecedented depths of sin and blasphemy. Though believers today do not have the privilege of sharing John's vision, . . . every believer can take the word pictures of Scripture here and anticipate the glory and the wonder of the heavenly scene that he will someday see with his own eyes" (Walvoord and Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Victor).

CONCLUSION

Jesus in Christian Worship

One of the burning issues of John's day was the danger of worshiping false gods. Under the reign of Emperor Domitian, citizens were required to do a yearly act of worship to the "genius" of the emperor—something Christians refused to do. For this they were persecuted, some even to death. John knew that one of the seven churches of Asia had suffered the martyrdom of a faithful member named Antipas (Revelation 2:13). Revelation tells the horrible story of people who worshiped a false god.

There are two sides to the coin of worship. On one side is the principle that *worship is for God and only for God*. If there is another recipient of worship, worship has become idolatry, the most grievous sin in the Bible. When John falls down to worship an angel, he is admonished, "Do it not ... worship God!" (Revelation 19:10). This is an absolute in the Bible. The elders fell down and worshiped, rendering divine homage not only to the triune God but also specifically to the Lamb (5:14). It is proper and fitting to worship Jesus the Lamb, who redeemed us by taking away our sin. This is the Jesus we have a relationship with today. He is seated at the right hand of God in Heaven. Jesus should be counted as worthy in our hearts and in our worship.

The other side of the coin is that *acts of worship clearly reveal who a person's god is*. We may claim to worship God, but the way we live our lives will show what we really count as worthy. It may be ourselves. It may be a political philosophy. It may be wealth and pleasure. We see Paul's awareness of this when he writes of those "whose God is their belly" (Philippians 3:19). Let us be aware of these things as well.

PRAYER

To God, the one who sits on the throne, we offer our praise, our honor, and our blessings. To the Lamb, our redeemer, we offer our deepest thanks and devotion. In Jesus' name, amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Honor Jesus in your worship.

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

We will study what will happen to believers living on the earth following the rapture of the saints. In spite of the tribulation to be unleashed by Satan through the antichrist and the false prophet, these converts to Christ will be clothed in robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb, representing His righteousness. Study Revelation 7:1-17 "**Christ Is Our Protection.**"

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