



gracefellowship

Revelation
February 10, 2019
Worthy is the Lamb

:: Revelation 5-6

Recap last week with the invitation for John to visit God's throne. John has been allowed to see God in His glory and as we get into chapter five, John notices something in God's right hand.

:: Revelation 5:1-4

1 Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals.

2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?"

3 But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it.

4 I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside.

God is holding a scroll with two very distinct things- writing on both sides and seven seals.

This scroll represents God's redemptive plan to judge and defeat evil once and for all.

The fact it has writing on both sides, which is unusual, most scrolls would only contain writing on the inside. However, twice in the OT we see God's prophet's shown a scroll with writing on both sides:

Zechariah 5:1-4

Ezekiel 2

Both descriptions of this scroll God holds are filled with lament and mourning and judgment.

The scroll also has 7 seals on it. When a scroll was opened and read and resealed, they would tie a cord around the scroll and then seal it with a wax seal. Before the scroll could be opened and read, each seal had to be broken. In Roman culture someone's final will was sealed with 7 seals from individuals who were witnesses to the legitimacy of the will. So, perhaps the best way to view this scroll God holds in His hand is to see it as His final will and testament about the

affairs of the universe.

John recognizes that in God's hand is the deed to the universe and judgments that must take place against sin and evil in order to return God's creation to its rightful state under His sovereign Lordship.

Then John saw a mighty angel call out in a loud voice **(Revelation 5:2)** "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" Can you imagine the excitement in which John waited for someone to step forward and carry out the final plans of God to restore creation and open the seals? But he says, **(Revelation 5:3)** "no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it."

No one in human history was worthy to carry out the will of God. None of the angels in heaven were found worthy to open the seals and carry out the judgments of God. And John responds by saying, **(Revelation 5:4)** "I wept and wept because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or look inside."

- This weeping is not just being a little saddened. The Greek indicates that John wept bitterly. This is the kind of weeping that takes place at funerals or following tragic events. He is in despair over this. God is ready to complete His prophesied plan of restoring everything back to its perfect state and no one can open the scroll to make that happen. In John's view at this point sin and evil and injustice and human suffering and oppression are not going to get their rightful day in court and John is despondent over that possibility.

Look at what John records next, however:

:: Revelation 5:5-7

5 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

7 He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.

John was told not to weep because the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed! These are two OT Messianic terms- the Messiah that the world was waiting for would come from the Tribe of Judah and would be from the family of David. While no human or created being was able to take the scroll and open it, there was One who is worthy: The Warrior Lion from the Kingly Tribe of David.

But when John turned to look at this magnificent One worthy to open the scroll, he didn't see what he anticipated!

6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

The Lamb is Jesus. The fact that He was slain shows that Christ's death and resurrection is eternally effectual before God.

He is worthy where others are not because of his sinless life, death and resurrection to make the only way for God and man to be reconciled. Where John may have expected to see a ferocious lion that conquered through its overwhelming power, he sees instead that the victory was won by the sacrifice of a peaceful lamb.

“The great victory over Satan has already occurred; the cross is the central point of history, and the final battle of Armageddon is the culmination of a victory already won. In actuality, Armageddon is more Satan's final act of defiance than the final victory of Christ. The victory of Christ is at the cross.” - Grant Osborne

The seven horns represent absolute power.

The seven eyes represent wisdom and insight, and are said to be the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is one with God in power on His throne and one with the Holy Spirit in executing the will of God in the universe.

To John's great pleasure, Jesus goes to God the Father and takes the scroll from His right hand. And when Jesus takes the scroll worship again breaks out in heaven!

:: Revelation 5:8-14

8 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people.

9 And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.

10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”

11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.

12 In a loud voice they were saying: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to

receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”

13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!”

14 The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Before we talk about the worship of Jesus, I want you to see something John mentions in the hands of the living creatures and the elders. He says they have harps, but they are also holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God’s people.

I want you to know this morning that your prayers to God are being heard and collected. As Jesus is about to open the seals and release God’s justice on the earth we see the faithful prayers of God’s people being brought before Jesus. So many times on earth we pray for justice to take place where injustice rules and where oppression exists. We pray for Christian saints who are being persecuted; we pray for righteous laws to be passed where abortion is concerned; we pray for people impacted by sex trafficking and for the end of that horrific practice. In all kinds of prayers for all kinds of injustice, God’s people stand before His throne praying for His righteous rule to be lived out in the earth. Yet often we feel though prayers go unheard, or at least unanswered, and we wonder why we continue to pray or if our prayers matter. This is the answer: Yes! Your prayers matter! God hears your prayers for righteousness; He hears your prayers for justice; He gathers up all our prayers for the oppressed and abused and mistreated and as the end draws near, Jesus will answer those prayers in the judgments He pours out on the earth.

God hears our prayers and He will be faithful to answer them and bring justice to His creation!

As worship of Jesus breaks out in heaven John says he hears a new song!

As the living creatures and the elders worship Jesus, the angels of heaven also get in on the act of worship. They proclaim Jesus alone is worthy to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise! Then John wraps us this crescendo by saying EVERY creature everywhere worships Jesus!

Jesus is worthy of eternal worship by everyone and everything! As God begins to unfold the final pieces of His redemptive plan, everything centers on the worship of Jesus.

We were created to worship God and as all things are finally reconciled to Him,

that worship will once again take place perfectly and eternally.

Let's move forward to chapter 6 and see what happens as Jesus begins to break the seals on the scroll. Many people have many different interpretations of these verses. One of the most popular ways to think about this passage has been made known through the series of books called *Left Behind*. If you're a fan of that series and have taken a view of the end times that lines up with those author's views, I want you to know up front that I am going to take a different view than them on several things. That doesn't mean we can't be friends or that you have to think I'm a heretic; it just means we are interpreting things differently. I want to close this morning by looking at the first four seals, often times known as the four horsemen of the Apocalypse.

As Jesus begins to open the scroll by breaking the seals, the justice of God is seen. These first four seals are things that God has been utilizing throughout history to get the attention of mankind and serve God's sovereign purposes. "The evidence suggests that these disasters run simultaneously through history rather than one after another in a severe trial right before Christ returns." (J. Scott Duvall).

These first four seals focus on the depravity of humankind as a means of showing that God simply allows human sin to come full circle, turn in upon itself, and self-destruct.

Let's look at the text together:

:: Revelation 6:1-8

1 I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!"

2 I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.

3 When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!"

4 Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make people kill each other. To him was given a large sword.

5 When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand.

6 Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "Two pounds of wheat for a day's wages, and six pounds of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!"

7 When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!"

8 I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the

wild beasts of the earth.

White Horse = Leaders and Governments bent on military conquest.

Throughout history mankind has had a propensity for military conquest, war and destruction. John represents this with a rider on a white horse wearing a crown and yielding a bow, but notice there is no arrow. While there is authority and power that man has to bring war and conquer the earth, no human leader or government has all power or authority over the earth. God uses this as a judgment against sin and to show the sinfulness of the human heart.

Fiery Red Horse = Removal of peace from earth.

Where war exists peace is removed. When peace is removed people destroy one another. In the first century the readers may have conjured up images of Nero or Domitian, who led the charge in extreme persecution. The large sword represents the judgment of violent death.

Black Horse = Injustice

Pale Horse = Death