

12. The Redeemer, the Lamb of God

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An orphaned boy was living with his grandmother when their house caught fire. The grandmother, trying to get upstairs to rescue the boy, got killed in the flames. The boy's cries for help were finally answered by a man who climbed an iron drainpipe and came back down with the boy hanging tightly to his neck.

Several weeks later, a public hearing was held to determine who would receive custody of the child. A farmer, a teacher, and the town's wealthiest citizen all gave the reasons they felt they should be chosen to give the boy a home. But as they talked, the little boy's eyes remained focused on the floor.

Then a stranger walked to the front and slowly took his hands from his pockets, revealing severe scars on them. As the crowd gasped, the boy cried out in recognition. This was the man who had saved his life. His hands had been burned when he climbed the hot pipe. With a leap the boy threw his arms around the man's neck and held on for dear life. The other men silently walked away, leaving the boy and his rescuer alone. Those marred hands had settled the issue.

Many voices are calling for our attention to be our spiritual leaders in this world. Among them is the One whose nail pierced hands remind us that He has rescued us from sin and its deadly consequences. To Him belongs our love and devotion.

A. WORSHIPING THE REDEEMER

Rev 5:1 And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

If similar to other scrolls in John's day, it was made of eight-by-ten-inch sheets of papyrus, which were connected horizontally and wound around a wooden handle. We see a scroll written on both sides and sealed with seven seals, which can be perplexing until one studies Jewish history. This means that this scroll is unusual. It wasn't common practice to write on both sides of the scroll. However we find numerous examples of a certain kind of document with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals: a title deed to a piece of property.

Initially, a title deed would be written only on the smooth side and sealed with a single seal. But if the owner became unable to meet his financial obligations, he would have to relinquish his title deed – upon the backside of which would be written his debts and upon which would be placed seven seals. If at any time during the ensuing seven years he could pay off his debts, the seals would be broken and the title deed returned.

All of this explains what is in the hand of the One who sits on the throne here in chapter 5. It's the title deed to planet earth. The title deed to this planet was originally given to Adam in the Garden of Eden when God told him to subdue the earth according to Genesis 1:28. But Adam forfeited his right to ownership when he ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. You see, although Eve was tricked into eating the forbidden fruit, Adam's was an overt, calculated act of rebellion, which is why the Bible speaks of Adam's sin as that which transferred to satan the title deed of our planet. This explains why Paul called satan the god of this world.

This brings an important point: I am sure that you all have heard, “Well, if God is so good, why are there wars, cancer, floods, AIDS, depression, rape, and injustice?” They’re blaming the wrong person. The planet God gave man was absolutely perfect. Man is to blame for turning the planet over to satan. And he is the reason the people to whom apostle John was writing were watching their brothers and sisters incarcerated or fed to the lions, crucified, or dipped in hot wax. This book was written not only to deal with prophecy, but primarily to deal with the questions with which apostle John’s flock wrestled—and the questions with which Christians have wrestled ever since.

Remember the emphasis is not on the content of the scroll, but on the One who worthy to take and open it.

Rev 5:2-4 Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?” And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.

Alexander the Great was willing. Genghis Khan was willing. Mohammed was willing. Napoleon was willing. Hitler was willing. There have been lots of people who have said, “I want to be in power. Give me a crack at it. Let me see what I can do.” But the angel doesn’t ask, “Who is willing?” The angel asks, “Who is worthy?” It has to be the one who is only willing, but also sinless and human. Angels could not do it, since they don’t need salvation through redemption. I believe that it narrows down very much the qualification of the person who can open the scroll.

When no one comes forward to reclaim earth’s title deed, John is overcome with grief when he realizes the people on the earth would remain in satan’s grasp forever.

According to the law that was given to the Israelites from Lev 25, we find that in redeeming the land, there had to be a few qualifications to be met. If the original seller could not purchase the land back, one of his relatives can try it. That relative had to have money to buy the land back with his willingness, not be forced.

We find a great example of this in the Book of Ruth. The kinsman redeemer Boaz did this for Ruth and Naomi.

When we put this in light of the salvation through redemption aspect, we can see clearly how the Savior Jesus Christ comes into the picture:

No man could purchase this earth back from satan, because there is no human who was sinless. None of us are qualified. Angels could not purchase the earth deed from satan, either, because they are not related to us. It had to be someone has a body of human, yet completely sinless. God took a form of humanity by putting aside His glory and made Himself lower than an angel, became a human. However, throughout His earthly life, He did not sin against God’s commands. At the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus cried out to the Father in heaven to allow the cup of the curse of men to pass by Him. But He willingly took our curse upon Himself by allowing Himself to be crucified.

By being a fellow human, Jesus met the first qualification, by being a perfect God without sin, He met the second qualification and by willingly taking our curses upon Himself on the cross, He met the third qualification. Now, the deed is in the hands of God the Father.

B. BECAUSE OF WHO HE IS

Rev 5:5 But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."

Three unique titles are given to our Lord to describe who He is:

1) He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

The reference here is to Genesis 49:8–10, where Jacob prophetically gave the scepter to his son Judah and made it the tribe of the kings. God never meant for Saul to establish a dynasty, because he came from the tribe of Benjamin. God used him to discipline Israel because the people asked for a king. Then He gave them David from the tribe of Judah.

The image of "the lion" speaks of dignity, sovereignty, courage, and victory. Jesus Christ is the only living Jew who can prove His kingship from the genealogical records. Currently none of the Jews around the world knows his lineage except Jesus.

2) He is the Son of David.

It was a title often used while He was ministering on earth.

3) He is the Root of David.

It means He brought David and David's line into existence. As far as His humanity is concerned, Jesus had His roots in David. But as far as His deity is concerned, Jesus is the Root of David. This speaks, of course, of our Lord's eternality. It is no wonder how Jesus could declare to the Jewish leaders, "Before Abraham was, I AM" in John 8:5.

When apostle John turned to see, he did not see a lion but a lamb! Jesus Christ is called "the Lamb" at least twenty-eight times in the Book of Revelation. The Greek word used means "a little pet lamb".

The theme of "the Lamb" is an important one throughout Scripture, for it presents the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer. The Old Testament question, "Where is the lamb?" in Gen. 22:7 was answered by John the Baptist who cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, which take away the sin of the world" in John 1:29.

C. BECAUSE OF WHERE HE IS

Rev 5:6-7 And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

The Lamb is the center of all that excitements in heaven. All creation centers in Him including the four living creatures and all of God's people. The angels around the throne encircle the Savior and praise Him.

He is at the throne. Some sentimental Christian poems and songs dethrones our Savior, because they emphasizes only His earthly life. These poems and songs glamorize "the gentle Carpenter" or "the humble Teacher," but they fail to exalt the risen Lord! We do not worship a Babe in a manger or a dead body on a cross. We worship the living, reigning Lamb of God who is in the midst of all in heaven.

The description of the Lamb in Rev. 5:6 would provide a grotesque picture. But it should have been understood symbolically to convey spiritual truth. Since seven is the number of perfection, we have here perfect power from 'Seven horns', perfect wisdom from 'Seven eyes', and perfect presence from 'Seven Spirits in all the earth'. The theologians would call these qualities omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence and all three are attributes of God. Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God, God Himself, God the Son and the Messiah.

I asked to underline '*Lamb as though it had been slain*'. It means if now in the act of being offered. This is very remarkable. We must note that the sacrificial offering of Christ in the sight of God is still represented as being in the very act of pouring out His blood for the offenses of man.

As the young boy from the story at the beginning of this sermon recognized his rescuer, we will recognize our Rescuer and Savior Jesus Christ when we see Him face to face.

D. BECAUSE OF WHAT HE DOES

Rev 5:8-10 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

When the Lamb came and took the scroll, the weeping ended and the praising began.

What kind of song did they sing? Obviously, it was a worship song that starts with "You are worthy!"

The more we meditate on the power and scope of Christ's work on the cross, the more humbled and worshipful we become.

Who is the only group of people who can say, "*For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.*"? Only the church, the redeemed people of God which means the church is already in heaven in chapter 5 before the Tribulation begins in chapter 6.

With their golden bowls full of incense, the elders symbolically present the prayers of the saints. However, they are not interceding for the saints, functioning as mediators for God's people.

1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,

Verse 8 should not be a justification for the Roman Catholic practice of praying to the saints, asking them to pray for us. These elders are not praying for the saints, only Jesus can be our true Mediator.

E. BECAUSE OF WHAT HE HAS

Rev 5:11-12 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten

thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

The angels and the elders fell down before the Lamb together. But it seems that only the people sang the song of the redeemed, because in no place does the Bible tell us of the redemption of angels. But now, the voice of many angels around the throne rises up with the praise of the Great Redeemer.

When does true worship take place? It happens when those in heaven see the slain Lamb. So, too, who are vibrant worshipers today? Not those who are manipulated by a worship leader or hyped up songs or stage lighting, but those who understand that Jesus really died for them. Anyone who truly sees the slain Lamb from the Word of God cannot help but worship.

Rev 5:13-14 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, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!" Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

One of the frequent questions I've been asked by young people and animal lovers was if there is any dogs and cats in heaven. Big dogs - yes, little yappers and cats - no way. Just kidding. However, this I do know: Jesus comes back to earth riding a horse according to Revelation 19. I believe that our Jesus is a regular cowboy. All the cowboys and cowgirls say, "Hee haw, Amen!" Hee haw is a cowboy's version of 'Hallelujah'.

Keep in mind that all of this praise centered on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer. All of heaven's praise came because the Lamb took the scroll from the Father's hand. God's great eternal plan would now be fulfilled and creation would be set free from the bondage of sin and death.

F. APPLICATIONS

1) The more we meditate on the power and scope of Christ's work on the cross, the more humbled and worshipful we become.

Only those who received Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord can understand the intimate meaning of worship of our God. When we realize what He has done on the cross on our behalf, it is not that difficult to bow our knees in adoration and love and humility.

2) We are reminded that there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.

When we pray to God, we don't need some saints to intercede our prayers for us. God the Son, our Savior Jesus Christ does it for us.