

Worthy Is the Lamb Who Was Slain

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Date: 10 April 2016

[0:00] Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the living creatures and the living creatures.

So I'm going to start this morning's sermon in a way that is a little more academic, I guess, than my usual introductions, which often involve sharing ridiculous things about myself. Revelation is a complicated book. It uses a lot of symbolism. There's a lot of stuff in there that's hard for us to understand.

I've heard it said on a number of occasions, including my seminary New Testament professor said this as well, that Anglicans often don't preach from Revelation.

To the extent that that's true, we need to do a better job. But I don't think it's just Anglicans that avoid Revelation. I think that a lot of Christians do, because it takes a bit of work to unpack it. But it is really worth the effort that we put in. So to just kind of give some background, some context, scholars seem to think that Revelation was written during the latter portion of the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian.

[2:01] Why is that important? Well, it's important for us to know that, because that was a time when the church was facing intense persecution at the hands of the Roman Empire and its wicked, ungodly emperor.

Revelation was written most directly to and for a persecuted church. Written to encourage them with the reality that Jesus, through his cross and resurrection, really is victorious.

Written to remind them that Jesus really has conquered sin, death, and the devil. And that all false gods and all forces that oppose the reign of the rightful king, Jesus, will be crushed.

That God's plan to save his people and to judge the world, through his son, our Lord Jesus Christ, will not be defeated. The church that was facing that persecution needed that reminder, because they were suffering for their faith in Jesus Christ.

Now, if we were to judge only from worldly standards, the situation they were in must have looked hopeless. They were being targeted by the most powerful civilization in the world in that time.

[3:26] Revelation reminds us that their situation wasn't hopeless. Why is that?

Because Jesus is Lord, Jesus is the true king, and the evil powers of this world and the spiritual forces of darkness will be conquered by him.

Now, just as they needed that assurance, the church, up to our own day, needs that assurance.

Jesus is Lord, Jesus is conquered, Jesus and Jesus alone is the worthy lamb who was slain.

And he will be victorious over all. Now, to get the whole context of what's going on in the verses that we read from Revelation 5 this morning, we really need to start in verse 1.

So, let's jump in. It reads, So, let's talk about the symbolism here.

[4:41] It's not too much of a stretch to say that the one seated on the throne is God the Father. But what about the scroll on his right hand? What is that? Well, scholars seem to agree that the scroll contains the plans of God for the salvation and the judgment of humanity.

In other words, it contains what will come to pass in salvation history. Ultimately, it contains the destiny of the world. What about the seals?

Why is it sealed? What is that? Well, the chapter goes on to talk about how it is that the seals might be opened. What does that mean?

The unsealing of the scroll has to do with the accomplishment of what God has destined to come to pass, as we'll see. Now, moving on, I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals.

And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it.

And I began to weep loudly, because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.

[6:02] No one in heaven or on earth or under the earth, no creature was able to open the scroll or to unseal the scroll or to look into it. And John begins to weep.

Why? No one is found worthy to see into God's plan for the destiny of the world, to look into it, and to bring it to pass.

So is that it? Is that a lost cause? There's no one able to save God's people. No wonder John wept. He must have thought, would things always continue like this?

Would sin and death continue to plague us? Would the devil never be defeated? Would the persecuted, suffering, servants of God never be vindicated? Would they never know God's victory? No. One of the elders said to me, Weep no more. Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.

[7:16] So there is one who is worthy. One worthy to look into the scroll, to see God's plan for the destiny of the world, and to bring it to pass to save God's people.

He is the mighty lion of the tribe of Judah, the son of David, the one who has conquered our enemies. He is Jesus Christ, the victorious, perfect, righteous son of God.

And he is worthy. Now we see him in verse 6. Between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns, with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

the lion of the tribe of Judah, also appearing as a lamb that had been slain. Who might that be? What do you think? Why is he standing between the throne of the Father and his creation?

[8:29] Think about that for a second. Isn't it because he is our mediator? He is our advocate. He is the one in whom we find our salvation, the one through whom we find forgiveness, the one who intercedes for us.

Could it be anyone other than the Lord Jesus Christ stand in there? He's pictured with seven horns. In Revelation 7, it's treated as this sort of heavenly number of completion.

And horns are a symbol of might. The seven horns remind us that all might, all authority, all power to save belongs to the Lamb. The seven eyes remind us that he sees all and knows all.

In Revelation, the seven spirits symbolize the Holy Spirit. And we are reminded that the full power of the Spirit is on him. He has the full anointing of the Spirit to accomplish the Father's purposes. Jesus. As we see elsewhere in Revelation, and see symbolized here, Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. And he went, took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.

[9:52] Not only is he worthy, but he is willing. He will take the scroll and accomplish God's salvation. And this assurance of victory, the confidence that it inspires, moves those who stand before the throne of God in heaven to song, to worship, and to praise.

When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures, and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. So we see these four heavenly creatures before the throne. And we see the twenty-four elders before the throne falling down on their faces to worship the Lamb.

Who are they? Who are they? Who are these twenty-four elders? What are they doing there? Well, scholars seem to agree that they represent, on the one hand, the twelve sons of Jacob, twelve sons of Israel, and on the other hand, the twelve apostles.

It's no mistake, there are twenty-four of them. In other words, they stand in as representatives of God's old covenant and God's new covenant people. And they recognize the Lamb, the Lord Jesus, they worship Him.

[11:10] They sing to Him. And what do they sing? They sing a new song, saying, Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals. For you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth. They are praising the Lamb, telling Him in song that He is worthy to look into God's purposes for salvation, to bring God's salvation to pass.

Why? Because He was slain. Because He and He alone was perfectly obedient to His Father, even unto death. And because He was obedient, He has saved God's people through His blood.

A people from every tribe, every nation of the world. And not only that, He has made them a kingdom to God.

A kingdom of redeemed people under the kingship of the Lord who have forgiveness through the blood of the Lamb. A kingdom of priests who have access to the throne of grace.

[12:21] And they will reign victorious over every enemy. They will share in the victory of the Lamb. And the song of praise expands.

The angels join in too. Then I looked and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands saying with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.

The angels know it too. The Lamb who was slain is worthy because He was slain. Because He humbled Himself unto death on a cross.

He's worthy to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing. So they sing Worthy is the Lamb.

Now imagine for a second how this music must have sounded in the minds of those persecuted Christians who first read those words. The claim they were suffering under is that the Roman Emperor was worthy to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and blessing.

[13:46] The song of the angels reminded them that no, only the Lamb is able to look into the scroll to unseal it to save God's people and to accomplish God's purposes and He will be victorious.

They were reminded that their only hope is found in the Lamb who was slain, the conquering Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Lord Jesus Christ. They were reminded that the Lamb is worthy, that this is their hope, their confidence, and their treasure.

Every generation of Christians since then, up to our own day, has read these words in times of trouble and found their joy in the worth of the Lamb who was slain and remembered that if we suffer, we will also reign with Him.

Back to our text, we see that the praise can't be contained at all. All creation joins in. I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is in them saying, To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever.

To the Father and to Jesus, be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever. What we see here is nothing short of an enactment of that reality that God has highly exalted Jesus and bestowed on Him that name that is above every name.

[15:27] So that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, the glory of God the Father.

Revelation's readers then and now are reminded that every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Isn't that right? Amen. And what more is there to say? Verse 14. The four living creatures said Amen and the elders fell down and worshipped.

And this morning so do we. The Lamb is worthy. The Lion of the tribe of Judah has conquered. Jesus will bring God's plan, God's salvation to pass.

He has redeemed us by His blood and every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord. The Lamb is worthy. Now the first century church reading this in the midst of persecution was reminded that the Lamb is worthy.

[16:48] The tomb of Jesus is empty. All who have faith in Him have the promise of His victory. have the promise of eternal life. But you know what?

That once mighty Roman emperor who persecuted these servants of Jesus his tomb isn't empty. He has rotted in the ground and Jesus is still King. What about our own day?

As I mentioned in my Easter Sunday sermon I recently saw a report that listed 2015 as the worst year in modern history for the persecution of Christians. Christians around the world are targeted for terrorist attacks and systematic persecution.

On Easter Sunday this year the same day that I preached that sermon over 70 people were killed in an attack on a park in Pakistan that targeted Christians who were doing nothing other than celebrating Easter.

And that's just one example one recent example of attacks and persecution targeting Christians. But what do we say to that?

[18:02] Worthy is the Lamb. All honor power glory and blessing belong to Him. He is victorious over all. He couldn't be defeated even by death and neither can those who place their trust in Him.

As for the false God that these murderers claim that false God isn't worthy and isn't even anything at all. But the Lamb is worthy. The Lamb is worthy and the Lamb is victorious.

Now let's bring it a little closer to home. In most of the West today we're not dealing with that kind of act of persecution. But it seems like things are moving in a direction of Christians being kind of marginalized and held in contempt in the West by the more aggressive forms of secularism.

Now sometimes the claim that we're confronted with is that our outdated moral commitments our belief in absolute truth have put us on the wrong side of history.

Have you heard that? Well that's a complicated claim more than I have time to address fully this morning. But let's be clear. The Lamb is worthy and the Lamb is victorious.

[19 : 23] Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega the beginning and the end. There is only one way to be on the right side of history and that is to be on the side of Jesus Christ. To be outside of Christ is to be on the wrong side of history.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ is coming again to reign and we who are in Christ will reign with him. That's historical reality.

Historically guaranteed. The worthiness and the victory of the Lamb means that false gods and the forces of this world that oppose his rule are bound to fail are bound to be defeated.

But that's not all. It also means that our fundamental enemy the devil has been defeated. Through his death and mighty resurrection the Lord Jesus has trampled Satan under his feet.

The one who accused us the one who held us captive through the fear of death has been beaten by the worthy Lamb who was slain and we have forgiveness and eternal life through faith.

[20 : 37] And the Lamb. Now one final thought. We've looked at the big picture.

Let's bring it even closer to home. Let's examine the claim that the Lamb is worthy. What about us? Are we worthy? No.

The Lamb is worthy and we are not. God. Now that is a reality that knocks the proud off of their pedestals but lifts up the broken. Now how does it lift up the broken?

Those who know that they are sinners. Because it points to the only one who can wash us clean with his precious blood, the Lord Jesus. Coming to Jesus in faith, acknowledging our sin, acknowledging our brokenness, acknowledging that he is worthy and we are not.

we find that the fierce conquering lion of Judah is also the Lamb who loved us and gave his blood as a ransom to make us his own while we were yet sinners.

[21 : 51] The same Jesus who has conquered, who has defeated the devil, has defeated the forces of evil, is the same Jesus who deals tenderly with sinners who come to him in repentance and in faith.

Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Lamb who was slain, is our hope and he is worthy and his victory is certain.

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. lip. lip. Y