

Text: Rev. 5:1-14 – Part One

Title: “Who is worthy?”

Time: 7/2/2017 am

Place: NBBC

Intro: Last Tuesday morning volunteers installed a privately funded monument to the Ten Commandments on the state capitol grounds in Little Rock, AR. On Wednesday a man smashed into the monument with his car and posted a video of his crime on his Facebook account. He was arrested that morning by capitol police.

News stories like that make people wonder what is going wrong in the world. Jerry Cox, President of the Arkansas Family Council was quoted as saying, “I just wonder what the world will look like in another five, ten years if this trend continues.”

Well, that is a question that comes to our minds often as we look around and see the degeneration of the culture we are living in. We tend to ask the question, “Why is everything all messed up?” “How could things have gotten so bad?”

This morning I want us to see that as important as that question may be, it is not the question that rings throughout God’s heaven. There, a different question entirely will be asked someday. The great angel will not stand up and say, “How could things have gotten so bad?” No, he shall stand up and ask instead, “Who is worthy to open the book and break the seals?”

Now that is an entirely different question. Rather than asking, “How did everything get so bad?”, heaven will ask, “Who is worthy to open the book and break the seals?” Heaven recognizes that things have gotten bad, but that is

not its concern. Its concern is who is worthy to do something about it? In this passage, John sees the wonderful answer to that question. There is One who is worthy.

If he were preaching this message to us this morning, I think the Apostle John would encourage us to focus on the right question. He would tell us to stop asking, "How is everything so bad?" and to start looking for God's answer to the question, "Who is worthy to open the book and break the seals?"

It is my prayer that the Lord would encourage us with the wonderful answer He has provided to that second question, and that this encouragement will strengthen us as things continue to get worse and not better in the day in which we live.

The passage is organized around the three times John tells us he saw something (vv. 1, 6, 11), so that will be our outline. John tells us three things that he saw about Heaven's answer to the question, "Who is worthy?"

I. John saw the need for the One who is worthy (vv. 1-5).

III: An organization called the "Satanic Temple" heard about the plan to erect a Ten Commandments monument on the capitol grounds in Arkansas. They responded by making plans to erect there a competing statue of Baphomet, a goat-headed, angel-winged creature, flanked by two children represented as smiling at it.

Those plans have been blocked by a new law that requires legislative approval before any monument can be authorized. The Satanic Temple is arguing that the new law should not be made retroactive against them, and they have

threatened a lawsuit to argue their case. That case would argue that the Satanic Temple is being discriminated against and treated unfairly.

Appl: So we live in a world in which right and wrong are upside down and all mixed up. We go to the courts to try to get the relationship between right and wrong straightened out again, and so often it just gets more confused.

Well, this chapter tells of a scroll that has God's answer to the correct relationship between right and wrong in this world, and to how that relationship is going to be restored (v. 1). Three things are immediately apparent about the scroll:

1. It comes from God the Father – only He can truly define the difference between right and wrong;
2. it contains great detail – it is written on the front and back, describing I believe with great specificity what is wrong, why it is wrong, and how God is going to make it right – God's judgments are always well-documented, not arbitrary or capricious; they are just judgments;
3. and it is sealed with seven seals – it is not easily opened; no one is worthy to open it and make things right; even the strong angel must cry for help (vv. 2-3).

Appl2: John sees a need for the opening of this book the way we see a need for making what is wrong in this world right again. Seeing the need the way he did made John weep much (v. 4). Jesus lamented Jerusalem that way (Matthew 23).

Have you ever faced discouragement over the spiritual condition of this world? Have you ever wept much over it? There is certainly a virtue in this weeping, for it shows that

John was not apathetic about the need for the scroll to be opened and for wrong to be made right. We are in greater trouble if we lose our desire to see wrong made right. But the passage also reminds us that much weeping and discouragement is not the answer to the wrong we see.

One of the elders tells John to stop weeping (v. 5). Jesus was known to issue that command at times.

In Luke 7:13 he told the widow of Nain who had just lost her only son to stop weeping. It says, "And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, 'Weep not.'"

In Luke 8:52 he tells the company bewailing a young daughter that had passed away, "Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth."

In John 20:11-15, the risen Jesus finds a despondent Mary outside His tomb weeping over a stolen body and a lost Lord, and He asked her, "Woman, why weepest thou?" Have you been discouraged over the evil and sin that is in the world?

Can we hear our Lord's command, "Stop weeping"?

The elder told John why he need not weep. The reason was very simple (v. 5b). Jesus is the Lion of the tribe of Judah and Root of David.

He is the promised Messiah, who Gen. 49:10 said would be the coming of Shiloh, the one who owns the scepter and the one who gathers His people, and who Isaiah 11 promised would make every wrong right again. Isaiah 11:

1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse,
and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:
2 And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of
wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and
might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord;
3 And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of
the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes,
neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:
4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and re-
prove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall
smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the
breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.
5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and
faithfulness the girdle of his reins.
6 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard
shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion
and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.
7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones
shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the
ox.
8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice'
den.
9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain:
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as
the waters cover the sea.
10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall
stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles
seek: and his rest shall be glorious.
11 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall
set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant
of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from
Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam,
and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of
the sea.

12 And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

13 The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.

14 But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them.

15 And the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod.

16 And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.

One of the exciting things for us today is that we have seen in recent history the regathering of a scattered Israel to their homeland. The time may be very near for the Lion of Judah and the Root of David to come forward to open the book and to make every wrong right again.

Conclusion Part 1: Before the idyllic conditions of the millennium described by Isaiah 11 can be established, Jesus, the Root of David, will make the wrongs things right. He will do so dealing with two kinds of people in two different ways (Isa. 11:4).

In which category are you – the wicked or the poor and meek? The Bible teaches that we are all born into this world as wicked, but Jesus came to die on the cross and pay for our sins. The poor and the meek are those who recognize their spiritual poverty and their desperate need for a Savior

and for forgiveness, and they place their faith in Christ for salvation.

The elder tells John that Christ is worthy because He overcame (Rev. 5:5). We can overcome because He overcame. He overcame by His work on the cross for us. We overcome by believing that He did that work on our behalf.

“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4-5). Do you believe? Will you overcome because Christ overcame?

II. John saw the One who is worthy (vv. 6-10).

III. John saw heaven’s response to the One who is worthy (vv. 11-14).

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching