

Text: Rev. 5:1-14 – Part Two

Title: “Who is worthy?”

Time: 7/9/2017 am

Place: NBBC

Intro: Last week we mentioned that heaven asks a very different question than the question we often ask here on earth. We ask, “How can things be so bad?” Heaven asks, “Who is worthy to open the book?” We need to ask the right question. We also need to be careful how we answer that question. Arrogant man often thinks he can solve his problems his own way, that he is worthy to open the book and correct what is wrong. Joseph Seis put it this way:

“Angels shrunk back from it as beyond their qualifications. Heavenly principalities and powers stood mute and downcast as they surveyed the requirements for the work. And yet, it would seem as if somewhere there had been efforts making to achieve it. And what, indeed, have been all the endeavours of unsanctified men, in politics, in science, and in all the arts of civilization, improvement, philosophy, and even religion, but to work out this problem of successful repossession of what was lost in Adam, to attain to that forfeited perfection and supreme good which has ever danced before their imaginations. What, indeed, has been the spring of the activity of the under world, in these ages of seductive effort with mortals, but to persuade men that they can make good the lying promise, ‘Ye shall be as God,’ and in spite of the Almighty, and without Him, to realize through human expansion and demoniacal guidance, the dream of a better destiny for the world and the race” (*Lectures on Revelation*, p. 118).

John testifies that no man was able to open the book, nor even to look upon it. Everywhere the world says we can

right the wrongs on our own. We can restore the Eden lost to Adam without the One who is worthy, because we are the ones who are worthy.

Well, in the face of that lie, Revelation 5 gives us God's answer to who is worthy to open the book and restore creation to its original state before man's fall into sin in Genesis 3. We noticed last week that the passage is organized around the three times John tells us he saw something (vv. 1, 6, 11), and we saw last week that in verses 1-5, John saw the need for the One who is worthy. We need to see that need, stop weeping, and live by faith in the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Root of David. This morning we will look at the rest of the passage together.

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

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

III: If I were to ask you what percentage of sermons you have heard had content that you can actually remember, I am sure that your answer would much like mine. I would have to say that I have listened to thousands of messages, and that I can count on one or two hands the number of those I can tell you about this morning. The preaching of the Word of God never returns void – this is God's promise. It always accomplishes God's purpose in our lives, so we need it, but we do not always remember it.

One of the notable exceptions for me was hearing a pastor who was also a seminary teacher of mine preach on verse six. What I remember especially was that he trembled with emotion and joy, his words being barely utterable because of the overwhelming power of his emotions. What made him cry with great love for his Savior was the contrast he

found in verses 5-6. May the Lord give us hearts and eyes to see what he saw.

Appl: An elder tells John to stop weeping in verse 5 because a Lion has overcome to open the book. In verse 6 John turns to see this Lion, and what he sees is a Lamb standing as if slain. The One who is worthy to right every wrong in final judgment is the One who, though a Lion, became a Lamb. This is what John sees when he sees the One who is worthy. Notice with me some characteristics of this Lamb:

1. The Lamb is not only in the midst of the seraphim and elders, but also in the midst of the throne (v. 6a). John tells us elsewhere, "The Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Jesus is both one with the Father in essence and distinct from Him in person. The Lamb is the God who sits on the throne of heaven.

2. The Lamb is willingly completely helpless. The Greeks had a normal word for *lamb* that is used elsewhere to refer to the Lord Jesus (ἀμνός; John 1:29, "The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"; 1 Pet. 1:18-19, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."; and Acts 8:32, "Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: "HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH.").

That last passage comes from the Septuagint translation of Isaiah, and we can see the willing helplessness of the Lamb in those wonderful words.

But this word for the Lamb (ἀρνίον) means *little-lamb* (used some 27 times in Revelation for Christ). The worthy One John saw was the Lion who became the Little-Lamb. He became willingly and completely helpless in this work.

3. The Lamb is standing as if slain (v. 6b). He is not dead. He is alive and well. And yet He had been slain. He was killed, but He is alive. That is the gospel. Jesus died on the cross for our sins according to the Scriptures, and He was buried, and He arose again the third day according to the Scriptures.

4. The Lamb has seven horns and seven eyes (v. 6c). *Seven* is God's number of completeness. The symbol of the seven horns means that He has full authority and power to execute the judgments He is going to bring upon the earth as He opens the books. The symbol of the seven eyes reminds us that He does this work still as the promised Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ. With God's Spirit upon Him His judgments are wise and accurate, full of omniscient knowledge and counsel and justice (Isa. 11:1-3).

5. The Lamb takes the book from the right hand of the Father (v. 7). Scrolls like this one in the Scripture are deeds of inheritance possessions (Jer. 32:6-12). The scroll described in this passage is a deed to an inheritance lost. It was once in the hand of Adam, but he forfeited it when he sinned. It now is in the hand of the Father whose justice requires One worthy to restore what was lost by paying the penalty for Adam's sin and the sin of Adam's race.

Appl2: So the God who shall judge the world in final judgment, crush His enemies, and take back what was lost by Adam, is everywhere in Revelation the Little-Lamb. What this means is that every human soul destroyed by the judgment of the Lion is actually a soul that was first given opportunity for redemption by the Lamb.

If you do not love God, the Lamb was judged for that. If you are an idolater, the Lamb died for that. If you have used God's name in vain, the Lamb died for that. If you have failed to honor the Lord's Day, the Lamb died for that. If you have dishonored and disobeyed your parents, the Lamb died for that. If you have hated someone or committed murder, the Lamb died for that. If you have lusted or committed adultery, the Lamb died for that. If you have stolen, or lied, or coveted, the Lamb died for that.

But if you have denied that He is worthy to save you from your sin, that He is the Lamb who is worthy to open the book of your life and give you back what Adam lost, making right every wrong and forgiving every sin, you must die yourself for that. Reject the Lamb in unbelief, and you have no sacrifice to atone for that sin. If you are someday condemned by God's judgment, it will be the worthy Lamb who judges you, because you thought yourself worthy rather than Him. If that has been you, I urge you to repent and believe that the Lamb is worthy to be your Lord and Savior this morning.

Appl3: Those who have believed that the Lamb is worthy to save them rejoice to see Him take the scroll (vv. 8-10). They fall down before the Lamb in worship (v. 8a). Their harps and bowls of prayers are there, for finally the themes of their songs and the answers to their prayers are no longer anticipations of their faith but the confirmations of their sight (v. 8b).

They sing a new kind of song about the worthiness of their Redeemer (v. 9a). He is worthy because He was slain, worthy because He redeemed us from every race and nationality, and worthy because He made us king-priests who shall reign with Him (v. 9b).

As you read that description, does your heart rejoice and long for that day? Or does it seem rather confusing and almost repelling to you? Do you understand why Jesus Christ is the One who is worthy to open the book this morning? Is He the One you worship? Is He the theme of your song and the answer to your prayers? Did He redeem you? Do you look forward to reigning with Him as His king-priest? I am sure that some must answer, "No" this morning. If that is you, pray that God's Spirit opens your eyes to the worthiness of the Lamb. May God make Him the object of your worship, the theme of your song, the answer to your prayers, your Redeemer and sure reward.

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

Appl: There are two things especially impressive to me about creation's response to the One who is worthy.

First, everyone responds. All creation in heaven and earth and under the earth will confess that the Lamb is worthy and will ascribe to Him power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing. Everyone will. You may not now, but you will someday. Those who confess Christ, though only a small minority right now, will be not only a super majority, but an absolute majority.

Appl2: Then second, note that everyone does this "with a loud voice" (v. 12; singular *voice*, not *voices*). All creation,

visible and invisible, shall someday worship in unison. We will not need one service for those who like contemporary pop-culture music and another for those who like traditional. All that nonsense will be an embarrassment of the past. Creation shall worship its Redeemer with one great voice.

Conclusion: Should we who are redeemed not do so now? Should we not praise Him as our Redeemer with one great voice? Who in this needy world heard of His worthiness from our lips this past week? Joseph Seis:

“Shall we then keep silence on the subject? – When the Living ones and Elders fail to sing about it in heaven; when inspired apostles no longer admit the subject into their holy writings; then, but not till then, let it be dropped from the discourses of our sanctuaries, and from the inculcations of them that fear God. And woe, woe, to that man who is convinced of its truth, but, for the sake of place or friendship, refrains from confessing it! Well has it been said of him: ‘He bartereth away his kingdom for the applause of men. He eclipseth the glory of Christ to enhance his own.’ He stultifieth the adoring songs of celestial kings, that he may win a little empty favour by base pandering to the pleasure of an ignorant, unbelieving, and godless world.”

Ill: We are anticipating in August a total eclipse of the sun. The moon will completely block the glory of the sun’s light.

How often have our lives been like a moon blocking the true glory of the worthy Lamb in this dark world? Instead, may we be like the full moon that reflects the light of the Lamb’s worthiness and glory to all who know our lives, until the that glorious day comes, and the shadows of our nighttime flee away.

“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*