

Study 11 – Revelation 5:1-8

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.

I am impressed once again with the transition from the first three chapters, where the focus is on earth, to the rest of the book, where the focus is on heaven. Our main attention and energy should be given to a heavenly agenda, not an earthly one.

Paul understood this and wrote:

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming (Colossians 3:1-6).

We are to set our mind on heavenly things. That is the answer of Revelation to the persecution and pressure the Church found itself encountering.

I like writing as a medium of communication. There wasn't a video, cassette tape, website, drama program, CD Rom or DVD in the hand of the One who sits on the throne. There was a **book** in His hands. Books are the time-tested medium of heaven to communicate God's will and word.

There seems to be an earthly reality and a heavenly one. The early church was under pressure of persecution, yet the scene in heaven is where the sovereignty of God is the overarching reality of existence.

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

That is the age-old question: Who is worthy to understand the secret things of God, to reveal the mind of God to mankind? The angel asked in a loud voice, so many have heard that question resounding in their spirit. The problem is that they came to the wrong conclusion as to its answer. Science, education, sociology, politics and medicine have not been able to open the scroll.

The problem for mankind is that no one was, is or will be worthy. No system of thought is worthy. No scheme of good deeds is worthy. No amount of wishing, hoping, trying or praying will make anyone worthy.

Buddha and Mohammed were not worthy. Never were, never will be.

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Every doctrinal dispute through Church history has been around the supremacy of Jesus. The dilemma of modern man is whether there is any one or any thing that can speak with authority on divine things.

The message of Revelation is that Jesus is supreme. It's all about Him all the time. It's not about the Church, doctrine, denomination or deed. It's only about Him.

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

My words are meaningless at this point. Let's look at God's words:

"The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all. He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. The man who has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him"(John 3:31-36).

"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 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, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11)

It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand-- with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him (1 Pet 3:21-22).

Only Jesus could and can open the scroll that the Father has written.

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

Human history is fraught with attempts to open the seals and understand God. Each attempt, apart from Christ, has ended in failure and weeping. Every ideal system and ideology has turned to dust. The message of Revelation, as the Bible concludes its presentation, is that Jesus is the only way.

What am I giving my life to? Why do I pursue so many things and interests that are doomed to failure and futility?

I just finished watching the most recent Olympic games. They are enjoyable to watch at times, but the Olympics represent a humanistic philosophy trying to bring peace and harmony to a sinful world. Each Olympics has examples of cheating,

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human error, and gross commercialism. This year's events cost \$310 million just for security while the world's hungry suffer for another d

Where are my priorities? My culture presents options every day that promise prosperity, peace and happiness. Yet I should be weeping for they are all exercises in futility that will pass away. Yet I serve a God and His kingdom that will never pass away. That is where my allegiance belongs; that is where my energies should be devoted.

The Bible gives us some examples of those who tried: Cain, the builders of Babel's tower, the Pharisees, and the Roman government, to name a few, all tried to please God and in return receive His endorsement or immortality. All failed.

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."

The good news for man is that there is one who is worthy to open the things of God for men. His name is Jesus. I am sure you are tired of reading this, but the conclusion in Revelation is that Jesus is the One! He is God's answer to all problems.

As Peter preached:

If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone." Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:9-12).

Jesus is a Lion – brave, strong, loud, deliberate, and supreme – and a Root – deep, immovable, and sustaining. Notice the Lion's residence is in heaven, but His pedigree is human. Our flesh, one of our own, sits at the right hand of God and is worthy to open the scroll.

Jesus' strength wasn't human. It came from a righteous life of obedience. He is exalted to the right hand of the Father because of what Paul wrote:

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 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, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:8-11).

6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He

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had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

What a graphic metaphor this verse contains! Jesus, at the center of the throne, looks like a lamb. We have seen the seven spirits mentioned before, and these seven spirits are embodied in Jesus, yet separate from Jesus. The Spirit of God isn't just sent to the Church, but it is sent to all the earth.

Jesus is likened to a lion, but that is not the only symbol that is appropriate. We should never overemphasize one part of God's character. While He is strong like a lion, He is also gentle like a lamb. Neither should be emphasized at the expense of the other.

There are some who only want to think of God as a gentle, loving lamb. Then others want to see God only as a conquering, powerful warrior. The truth is: He is both and we can encounter Him in either capacity.

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

Wow! He didn't have to seize the book, or obtain it by force or trickery. He just went up and took it. That means that God the Father who held the book, released it to the Lamb, to Jesus. There is cooperation in heaven among the personalities of God. Shouldn't there be the same cooperation on earth among His church? Often, there is not.

Jesus was close enough to the throne that He could take the book. And the hand holding the book allowed Him to take it, so He must have been considered worthy.

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 the saints.

The Lamb is worthy of worship. Some religions say that Jesus was a good man, a prophet, and the "son of God." He is worthy not of admiration, however, but of worship. If Jesus receives worship and He isn't God, then He is guilty of breaking God's commandments against idolatry. But my point is: He is worthy because He is God.

Notice that the **Lamb** is the One worshipped. This Lamb was the One who suffered, who was slaughtered for His people. It is not the Lion that is worshipped, but the suffering Lamb, the Lamb that was slain.

Jesus' sufferings qualified Him to take an exalted place. Do you think your sufferings are designed to do the same?