

WORTHY IS THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN!

Every once in a while—as I’m thinking about the Big Picture of the New Testament—I find myself wondering how well the apostles John and Paul **knew** each other—and how **much time** they spent together. The Bible doesn’t say a lot, but we do know this:

--**Their lives overlapped:** John lived from roughly 1 AD to 100 AD and Paul lived from approximately 5 AD to 65 AD.

--And even though John’s name is **not mentioned** in Acts 15 when Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to discuss with the apostles and elders how much of the Law of Moses applied to converted Gentiles, we do know John was there!

--**How** do we **know**? Because Paul himself said he was there! Galatians 2:9 “And when **James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars**, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.”

So why do I bring this up? Because some of the things Paul **wrote** about, the apostle John got **to see**—one of which we looked **at last week!** What was that? Every **knee bowing**—and every **tongue confessing**—that Jesus Christ is Lord! Paul wrote about it in Philippians 2:9-11; John “saw it”—and also wrote about it—roughly 30 years later in Revelation 5!

We’re going to look at that in a little bit, but we need to start in Revelation 1:1. Please turn there and notice what it says. In a nutshell, Jesus Christ—through an angel—reveals to John things about Himself. In other words, the book of Revelation is **a revelation**—“a disclosure of what had been concealed” (Robert Thomas, *An Exegetical Commentary: Revelation 1-7*, pg 50)—**about** Jesus, **from** Jesus.

Put your thinking caps on. Prior to this, **when** did John last see Jesus? The last time John would have seen Jesus was when Jesus **ascended into heaven** from the Mount of Olives as told in Luke 24 and Acts 1.

Both here in Revelation 1:13-16, we have a **very different description** of Jesus than when John had previously seen Him! And in verse 17, we see John’s response to this new “revelation” of Jesus: “And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.”

Now verse 19—the key verse to understanding—and rightly interpreting—the entire book! “Write the things which thou hast seen” (Rev 1:1-20), “and the things which are” (referring to the current state of the seven churches as stated in the letters written to them, Revelation 2:1-3:22), “and the things which shall be hereafter”—meaning future events—which starts at Revelation 4:1 and continues until the end of the book.

Now jump ahead to Revelation 4, verses 1-2. Maybe you noticed as I read the phrase in the end of vs 1 “...and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.” Certainly sounds like the last part of Revelation 1:19!

For the sake of time, I’m not going to delve into whether this is a picture of the Rapture (a trumpet sounds; “Come up hither”) and whether or not John was **transported to** heaven—or if it was just a **vision of** heaven. The main thing I want us to think about is the **throne**—and the **One who sat on** the throne.

Now Revelation 5, verse 13. “And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth”—same order that Paul had in Philippians 2:10—“and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”

So there we have it: John **seeing**—and **hearing**—what Paul wrote about: every knee bowing—and every tongue confessing—that Jesus Christ is Lord! And some of you may remember me saying at the close of last week’s sermon something to the effect: ‘If you don’t like singing praises to Christ now, you will feel uncomfortable—and out of place—in heaven!’

And that led me to this thought: why are we so “stingy” with our praise **now** when it will be what we do **naturally**—and **continually**—in heaven? The “pat answer,” of course, is that we still have a **sin nature**...and live in a **sin-cursed world**...and aren’t literally in the **physical presence** of God where our eyes can see Him!

And those things are certainly true! But...we can also use that **as an excuse!** God wants us to “give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name” **now**—not just when we **see Him!** So **how** can we **cultivate an awe** and **gratitude** toward the exalted Christ now? One way is to **behold Him on the throne**—and hear what those who are in heaven now are saying! And that is some of what we are going to be looking at this morning!

First—in way of background—let’s consider... **1. The scene in heaven**

--Revelation 5:1. We know from chapter 4:8 that “Lord God Almighty” is the One on the throne.

--The word “book” can also be translated **scroll**—and that is **probably what is meant** here.

--“Written within and on the back side” refers to **both sides** being written on. That can be true of a **book**—but makes more sense for a **scroll**.

--“Sealed with seven seals.” What does that mean? Documents at that time were “sealed” to prevent people from **opening them up** and **looking at** the contents. For example, a king might send a scroll to someone and would “seal it” by putting some wax on the edge of the paper where it met the rest of the scroll.

--**An imprint of his ring** was sometimes pushed into the wax to show it was from him.

--**A broken seal meant** that the scroll had been opened—and **presumably read**—by someone other than the person for whom the scroll was intended.

--So how would **seven** seals work? All seven seals **couldn’t be** on the one long edge. Why? Because to open the scroll, all seven seals would be broken at the **same** time—and the Bible says they were broken **one at a time!** Robert Thomas, in his exceptional two-volume commentary on Revelation, suggests that the scroll was **sealed from the end**. John would be able to **see** all seven seals at one time—and **opening one seal at a time** would not require them all to be broken at the same time.

Next, let’s consider... **2. The search for a worthy opener of the scroll**

--We see the **search** referred to in verses 2-3, notice what they say.

--In vs 2, we see a **strong** angel with a **loud** voice. That carries the idea that the call was made **worldwide**.

--In vs 3 we see that even though the call went **to everyone**—everywhere—**no man** (or woman) was found worthy to open it. **Why** was it **so difficult** to find someone worthy to open this scroll? Because of what it **said**—and what it **required**.

--So **what** did the scroll **say?** Was it just the **proclamation** of future events? If it was just a **revelation of future events**, **John himself** could have opened it—and read it—similar to the prophecies of the future that were revealed to—and written down by—**Daniel**. So it had to **involve more than** just proclaiming the future.

We’ll come back to this thought in a little bit.

Now, vs 4. Here we have... **3. The sorrow of John**

--**Why** was John so **distraught?** **Why** did he “weep much” because **no one was qualified** to open the scroll?

--Was it merely because John thought **his curiosity would remain unsatisfied** due to not knowing the “things which must be hereafter” as stated in Revelation 4:1?

--To best understand John’s sorrow, we need to remind ourselves of some of the things **John had heard from Jesus**. In Matthew 24:3, the disciples had asked Jesus about the sign of **His coming** and the **end of the world**.

--In His response to their questions, He reminded them of the **book of Daniel**—which prophesied of Christ coming to earth and setting up a kingdom.

--In **Matthew 24:30**, we read these words from Jesus—and that John most certainly would have heard: “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the **tribes of the earth mourn**, and they shall see the Son of man **coming in the clouds** of heaven with **power and great glory.**”

--And in Revelation 1:7, John himself alludes to Daniel 7:13 when he writes: “Behold, **He cometh with clouds**; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and **all kindreds of the earth shall wail** because of Him. Even so, Amen.”

--And let’s not forget that John was the last apostle standing—the rest had been killed! He also witnessed **the destruction of the temple** by the Romans in AD 70—and was currently in exile on the isle of Patmos for his faith! So John was looking **forward to the return of Jesus**...and the **kingdom of Jesus** being set up on earth!

--And based on all of these factors, I believe John also understood that the One who opened the scroll wasn’t going to just **read the contents**—He was going to **bring to pass what the scroll said**. His fear, then, was that God’s plans would be **put on hold** because no one was worthy to open the scroll!

Next, in verses 5-8, we have... **4. The soothing words because of the slain Lamb**

--Please follow along as I read verses 5-8. For the sake of time, we can’t go into these verses in detail, but I do need to point out a couple of things.

--John is told not to weep because the Lion of tribe of Judah—another **title of Jesus**, the slain Lamb—**is worthy** to open the book and loose the seven seals.

--**The four beasts**—referred to in verse 6 and introduced to us in Revelation 4:6—are probably the same type of **angelic beings** referred to in Ezekiel 1 and Isaiah 6.

--**Who** are the **“four and twenty elders”** referred to in Revelation 4:4...and 4:10...and 5:8? Some suggest that they are **another classification of angelic beings**; others suggest they **represent the church**—although it doesn’t say that they **represent** anyone! **Why 24?** We don’t know because the Bible doesn’t say! Some suggest 24 because there were 24 courses—groups—**of priests** during David’s reign. Others suggest 24 because there were 12 tribes of Israel—and 12 apostles.

--For what it’s worth, I lean toward them being representatives of the church. **Why?** Because we don’t read of **angels being redeemed**—like it says in vs 9—or being **made “kings and priests”** that reign on the earth like it says this group will do in verse 10!

--Another reason I lean toward the four and twenty elders **referring to the church** is based on the rest of the chapter!

--Verses 11-12 is definitely said (or sung) **by angels** because that’s what it says!

--If verses 9-10 also refers to **only angels**, then you would have **two songs** from angelic beings—and **one song from all of mankind** (in **one big group**) as seen in verse 13—with none specifically from the church!

--If, however, the four and twenty elders **represent the church**, then the church—plus the four cherubim or seraphim—have a song, the angels have a song, and the rest of mankind has a song.

Regardless of **who** is in **what** group, we have **three** somewhat different songs—but they all direct their praise **to the Lamb!** And—being transparent here—my **original intent** was to **look at** the song of verses 9-10, **skip** the song of the angels in verses 11-12, and **finish up with** what brought me here in the first place—the song of all of mankind in verse 13! But as I started thinking about—and wrestling with—verses 9-10, I realized it was **too rich** to hurry through!

So lastly, let’s consider... **5. The song of the four beasts and 24 elders (vss 9-10)**

--Vs 9 “And **they** sung a new song...” Who is the “they”? The four “beasts”—and four and twenty elders referred to in vs 8! Although we can’t be sure—with 100% certainty—who the **four and twenty elders** are, we certainly know that the four “beasts”—the four living creatures—are some kind of **angelic beings**. And since we know that for sure, we cannot skip **the angelic perspective** of the Lamb’s worthiness!

A. The reason of the Lamb’s worthiness from an **angelic** perspective

--What is the once-slain, now-glorified Lamb, worthy **to do?** Notice again what it says: “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to **take the book [scroll], and to open the seals** thereof...”

--**Why** would the Lamb’s worthiness to take the scroll and open the seals be of an interest to them? In other words, **why did it matter** to them if the seals **were broken** or not?

--I think the best way to answer that question is to consider—from the angels' perspective—what had happened in the past—and what would happen in the future—once the seals were broken.

--What had happened **in the past**? Satan had **rebelled**—and **took a third** of the angels with him. Satan **tempted** Adam and Eve and **plunged mankind** into sin. Satan had **instigated the slaughter** of innocent babies in and around Bethlehem when Jesus was a young child. And Satan—as the prince of the power of the air and god of this world—has continually worked at **deceiving people** regarding the **ways** of God and the **Word** of God!

--But **the angels know** Satan is a **defeated foe** that will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10). And so the angels **want the slain Lamb**—who is also the King of Kings—to **take His rightful place** as King—and put Satan “in his place.” And the opening of the seals by the Lamb is **the beginning of the end** of sin and Satan!

So there you have the reason for the Lamb's worthiness from the **angel's** perspective. Next, let's consider...

B. The reason of the Lamb's worthiness from the **redeemed's** perspective

--**Who is singing** the new song of verses 9 and 10? The **four living creatures** and the **four and twenty elders!**

--And even though the **angels** aren't redeemed, the **four and twenty elders are** if they represent the church.

--But **regardless of who** the singers of the song are—and the various ways verse 9 is translated—we must be convinced of this truth: the song **applies** to the redeemed even if it is sung by angels!

--**What** does it **mean** to be redeemed? It means to be **purchased**, to be **bought back** from something.

--**What** are we purchased **from**? We have a **sin-debt** that we owe—and the payment for that debt is **separation from God**—forever! So we are redeemed from the **penalty of our sin**.

--**How** are we redeemed? What does the verse say? We are redeemed to God “**by thy blood**”—meaning the blood of the **Lamb of God**—who is also the **Son of God**—who sits on the **throne of God!**

--And that is **why the praise** goes to the Lamb—and **no one else!**

--It does not go **to me and what I did**—and it does not **go to you** and what **you did!**

--And it does not go to Mary...or Peter...or the Pope...or a pastor...or a priest!

--The **slain Lamb** is the One who redeems—period! “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!”

--**Who** are the ones that the Lamb redeems? Does He redeem everyone? **No; He doesn't!** The end of verse 9 says there are some **out of** every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation—but “out of” certain groups doesn't mean the whole group!

--So **who** are the redeemed ones? **Who** are the ones that **God forgives** and **saves** from the penalty of their sins? The ones who **have**—not just know about—the Son! **I John 5:12** “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

How do we “get” the Son? We come to Him in humility and repentance—and receive Him as a gift by faith. **John 1:12** “But as many as received Him [Jesus], to them gave He [God] power [the right] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His [Jesus'] name:”

What happens when we come to the slain Lamb in repentance and faith?

A wonderful “exchange” takes place!

“His robes for mine, O wonderful exchange!

Clothed in my sin, Christ suffered 'neath God's rage.

Draped in His righteousness, I'm justified.

In Christ I live, for in my place He died.”

The slain Lamb is worthy to be praised because He **purchased the redemption** of God's children! And as if that weren't enough, verse 10 points to... C. A result of redemption for the redeemed

--What is **a result**—as opposed to “**the**” result—of being redeemed? What is **one** of the many blessings?

--Notice verse 10 “And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

--There is a lot to unpack in this verse—possibly more than you've thought about before!

--Here's a biggie: if God's people in heaven are going to come **back** to earth to **reign** on the earth with the Lamb, that means **we will be leaving heaven** once we've already been there!

--And some of you might be thinking, "But what if I don't want to go back? Will I be able to stay?"

--To which I reply, 'You won't **want to stay** in heaven if the Lamb's not there! You forever and only will want to be where the Lamb is!'

--Not only that, it will be a **blessing** to reign with Christ—not a **punishment!**

--**When** will we come to earth and reign with Christ? **At the end** of the seven-year tribulation period, after Christ has opened the seven **seal** judgments...and the seven **trumpet** judgments...and the seven **vial/bowl** judgments!

--And our **hesitancy**—our reluctance—to want to see all this take place indicates (at least to a small degree) our lack of desire to see the **Lamb exalted**—and our **lack of belief** in the goodness and greatness of God!

--It shows we **walk by sight**—instead of by faith.

--And it shows we trust **our own** wisdom and not the **wisdom of God!**

Here are a couple of verses that I believe will help **whet your appetite for the future**. **Ephesians 2:6-7** "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: ⁷ That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

Do we really understand what it means to be seated "together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus?" No; we don't! But we're going to in the future! In **the ages to come**, we are going to see—and experience—the exceeding riches of God's grace (meaning undeserved favor) in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

"When we've been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun, We've no less days to sing God's praise, Than when we'd first begun!"

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain! May Jesus Christ be Praised!

So what does God want you to do in light of what you've heard this morning?

1. First, make sure you are child of God! Jesus Christ—the slain and resurrected Lamb of God—is the only payment for your sins that God accepts. And if you reject God's payment, God will reject you!

It is really that simple!

2. If you **are a child of God**, you should want the Lamb exalted! How do you do that? Love Him...and praise Him...and serve Him...and thank Him and tell others about Him!

3. Here's another thing we need to do—working at developing a **heavenly** mindset! The rest—and best—is yet to come. Don't drive your tent stakes too deep because this world is not our home—"we're just a passin' through!"