

THE ONLY WORTHY ONE

Jon Macon

Whereas Revelation chapter four is primarily about the Father, Revelation chapter five is primarily about Jesus Christ. In verse one, we see yet another example of the typical pattern where John is writing down strictly what he saw and heard. In this verse, God is sitting on his throne with a book in his right hand. The book is an unusual one, in that it has writing within the book but also on the backside of the book, and it is sealed with seven seals. In verse two, a “strong angel” (whose identity is not revealed) proclaims with a loud voice, *“Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?”* In verse four we find the answer to this question. *“And no one in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.”* Ultimately, only the Lion of Judah and Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, was found worthy.

A cause for weeping

In Revelation 5:4, the original Greek literally reads *“and not even one.”* There was no being in heaven or in earth, or under the earth, who was worthy to open this book. Man is certainly unworthy because of his sins (Rom 3:23). Angels are not equal to Christ, because they are created beings (Heb 1:7), and they also have not been subject to all of the temptations of the flesh like Jesus has (Heb 2:14-18). Jesus was tempted in all points like we are, yet without sin (Heb 4:15). No one besides Jesus was worthy even to look upon the book that was in God’s right hand, let alone open it and read it (Rev 5:4). John wept because of this. The question comes, Why did John weep? To understand John’s reaction, we must remember that John had been called up to heaven to be shown things that must be hereafter (Rev 4:1). Clearly, this book in God’s hand was at the heart of what John had been called up to heaven to see. John was no doubt greatly anticipating the opening of the book, and then his hopes were disappointed when the book could not be opened. That was an occasion for weeping. But in verse five, one of the twenty-four elders speaks some encouraging words to John: *“Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.”* Here, we have our introduction to Jesus Christ.

The Lion and the Lamb

Jesus is described here as both a lion and a lamb. And, of course, he *is* both. Jesus is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David. On earth, Jesus was physically descended from David (Matt 1:1-17; 22:45-46; Rom 1:3-5). And, today Jesus is sitting on the throne of David at the right hand of God, reigning over his eternal kingdom, the church (Luke 1:31-33; Matt 16:18-19; John 18:36-37; Acts 2:29-36; Eph 1:22-23; 5:23; Col 1:13,18). We also need to keep in mind the fact that Jesus will return again in flaming fire to take vengeance on all those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel (2 Thes 1:7-10). Jesus has been appointed to judge the world after he comes again (Acts 17:31). But Jesus is not only called the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

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(continued)

Jesus is also called “the Lamb which was slain.” Before God delivered the children of Israel from Egypt, the people sacrificed a lamb and put its blood over the doors of their houses (Exodus 12). The Lord then “passed over” their houses and the blood of the lamb led to their redemption from the bondage of Egypt. This was a shadow of what Christ would do for all mankind. Jesus was the Passover lamb whose blood was shed to redeem man from the bondage of his sins and to give him eternal life (Isaiah 53; John 1:29,36; Acts 8:30-35; 1 Cor 5:7; 1 Pet 1:18-21). This had been God’s plan “before the foundation of the world” (1 Pet 1:20), which is why Jesus is called “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8). Jesus as both Lion and Lamb reminds us of Romans 9:22: “*Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.*” Jesus came to earth the first time as the Lamb to save the world. The second time, he will come as a Lion to take vengeance on all those who have rejected him.

Lord and Christ

After the elder tells John that Jesus had prevailed to open the book, Revelation 5:6 tells us that “a Lamb as it had been slain” stood in the midst of God’s throne and the four beasts and the 24 elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes. We are told that these are “the seven Spirits of God sent forth unto all the earth.” We know that Jesus has been made both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). Jesus is Lord of all the earth (Acts 10:36), ruling with a rod of iron in the kingdoms of men through his earthly ministers, the government authorities (Rom 13:1-8). Jesus is Christ, ruling over the church as its head. Jesus has all authority in heaven and in earth (Matt 28:18) and this authority is depicted in the appearance of the Lamb in Revelation 5:6. In verse seven, Jesus the Lamb came and took the book from the right hand of God on his throne. Following this, the 24 elders sang a new song: “*Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth*” (Rev 5:8-10). Millions of angels then loudly said, “*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing*” (Rev 5:11-12). Finally, “*Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever*” (Rev 5:13). We have our opportunity now to willingly submit to this Worthy One and reap everlasting life. All others will bow before him and confess him to the glory of God the Father on Judgment Day (Rom 4:11; Php 2:9-11). Let us be of that number who are wise enough not to wait until it is too late for our souls.