

International Sunday School Lesson Study Notes

Lesson Text: Revelation 5:6-13

Lesson Title: Worthy Is the Lamb

Introduction

Although the Book of Revelation was authored by John, the son of Zebedee, author of the Gospel of John and I, II, and III John, it is not "The Revelation of Saint John the Divine." It is *"The Revelation of Jesus Christ"* (Revelation 1:1). The word "revelation" means "a disclosure or unveiling." The entire book is the revelation of our Lord's person in a new relationship to the church and to the world. The book also reveals titles given to our Lord as related to His future work in His people and the world at large.

The book of Revelation was probably written during the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian, around A.D. 95. Rome was governed by decrees and orders handed down from Domitian to his subjects. Any document or decree issued from the throne of Domitian carried authority and took precedence over all other rules and decrees. When Domitian issued a decree, it was written on a sheet of papyrus, rolled, sealed and delivered. Only an authorized person could break the seal and put the decree into action.

The scene John describes in Revelation 5 takes place in heaven and continues John's vision of the throne in heaven presented in Revelation 4. The events in Revelation 5 are after the rapture of the church (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 4:1) and prior to the Great Tribulation. In Revelation 5, John is introduced a *"book"* (Revelation 5:1-5) which contains the prophecy of events to be unfolded in the book of Revelation. This "book" is actually a scroll, which is given significance because it is located *"in the right hand of him that sat on the throne"* (Revelation 5:1). It is also significant because it has writing *"on the backside"* and is *"sealed with seven seals"* (Revelation 5:1).

John's attention is drawn to the *"book"* by the announcement of *"a strong angel"* (Revelation 5:2). "Strong" means "mighty or powerful." It is this *"strong angel"* that loudly asks the question, *"Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?"* It is clearly evident that what is sealed in the "book" can only be opened by someone who is worthy. When *"no man in heaven...was able to open the book,"* John *"wept much"* (Revelation 5:4). This purpose of this dramatic scene is to impress upon John the importance of what is about to be revealed.

The Lamb is Worthy to Open the Book (Revelation 5:6-7)

As John weeps because no one in all creation is found worthy to open the book, "one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof" (Revelation 5:5). The reference to "*the Lion of the tribe of Juda*" comes from Genesis 49:9-10, where it is predicted that the future ruler of the earth will come from the tribe of Judah, the lion tribe. Reference to "*the Root of David*" comes from the prophecy of Isaiah 11:1 and the Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7. What Christ has accomplished through His victory over death, hell, and the grave has given him the right to not only take the book from the right hand of God but to also break the seals and control the future of the world. Yes, the Lamb is worthy!

Verse 6

"And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth."

"And I beheld" means John is a spectator and writing about what he sees. As John looks "in the midst of the throne" of God," he sees "the four beasts" and the "elders." "One of the elders" is a reference to the "*four and twenty elders sitting*" referred to in Revelation 4:4. These "elders" represent the church, the redeemed, after they have been raptured from the earth. The "four beasts" were most likely cherubim of the highest intelligence in heaven. The presence of "one of the elders" and "the four beasts," indicate that issues related to God's creative and redemptive rights are about to be unveiled.

The worthiness of Christ to rule the world order is not based only on His being from the tribe of Judah and lineage of David. His worthiness is based primarily on the fact that this "*Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David*" (Revelation 5:5) was also the "Lamb" that was "slain." The word "Lamb" here is the word meaning "little lamb." This refers to the gentleness and willingness of Christ to be sacrificed for the sin of man (Isaiah 53:7; John 1:29). The word "slain" means "slaughtered, butchered." As J. Vernon McGee contrasts the "Lion" and the "Lamb" characteristics of Christ, he states that the lion character refers to His second coming, since the lion speaks of His majesty. As "Lion of the tribe of Juda" He is sovereign; as "Lion" He is Judge. The "Lion" speaks of the government of God. The "Lamb" character refers to His first coming, for the "Lamb" speaks of His

meekness. As "Lamb" He is Saviour; as "Lamb" He is judged. The "Lamb" speaks of the grace of God.

"Stood" is an important part of how John viewed the "Lamb." A "slain" lamb don't usually stand. But Christ arose from the dead and is now standing in power. "In the midst of the throne" indicates that Christ as "Lamb" is at the throne of God and ready to act in judgment as written in the "book."

The "Lamb" John saw had "seven horns" which speaks of perfect power. The Lamb had "seven eyes" which speaks of perfect knowledge. The "seven eyes" are identified as the "seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." This is most likely a reference to the sevenfold perfect Spirit of God sent into the world by Jesus Christ.

Verse 7

"And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne."

"He" is a reference to the "Lamb." John sees the "Lamb," Jesus Christ, come and take "the book out of the right hand" of God. In the act of receiving the "book" from God the Father, it is clear that judgment and power over the earth are committed to Christ the Son of God. The prophet Daniel reveals this same truth in Daniel 7:13-14 where Daniel reveals the ultimate triumph of Christ when the kingdoms of the world are given to Christ.

The Lamb is Worthy to Receive Worship (Revelation 5:8-13)

Verse 8

"And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints."

The significance of the scene John saw in heaven was also recognized by the "four beasts" and the "twenty-four elders." Previously, the "beasts" and "twenty-four elders" had *"given glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne"* (Revelation 4:9) which was God Himself. Now, they "fell down before the Lamb" in worship indicating that the "Lamb's" authority is the authority of God himself, and He is worthy of worship. The only place in the universe where Jesus is not recognized as God is in the heart of the unbeliever.

"And when he had taken the book" means a completed action. Once the "book" was "taken," Christ begins to judge the world as the Great Tribulation is about to unfold (Revelation 6). Notice how those around the throne and in heaven respond to the "Lamb" taking the book. The "four beasts" mentioned previously Revelation 4:8 are not to be thought of as animals. The prophet Ezekiel says they are glorious but almost indescribable cherubim and angelic beings (Ezekiel 1:4-25). Along with the "twenty-four elders" they fall down "before the Lamb" in worship.

The "four beasts" and the "twenty-four elders" had "harps" and "golden vials full of odours." "Harps" denote praise (2 Samuel 6:5; Psalm 150:3). The text does not tell us that the "harps" were actually played on this occasion, but that is the implication. The "golden vials" or bowls "full of odours" refer to sacred perfume or incense. They represent the "prayers of the saints." John is telling us in this scene, that God is responding to the prayers of His people. As the "Lamb" takes the "book" in preparation to pour out judgment, He is actually answering the prayers of God's people. This scene also shows us the importance of prayer in relation to the earthly scene. The prayers of believers down through the ages for prophesy to be fulfilled and for the Lord to come again are being answered. This is closely related to David's prayer in Psalm 141:2, *"Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice."*

Verse 9-10

"And they sung a new song, saying, 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."

Christ is "worthy" because He is able to do what *"no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able..."* to do (Revelation 5:3). He is "worthy to take the book, and open the seals thereof." That is the basis of the "new song" and worship John is witnessing in heaven. Included in the vocal expression of worship was a "new song" in which Christ is declared to be "worthy" because of His redemptive work. The "new song" was sung by the "beasts" and the "elders." Since the "beasts" are most likely cherubim, they do not sing out of redemptions experience but only echo the song of the "elders." The same is true of the "angels" in verse 11-12.

For the second time in this scene, reference is made to the "Lamb" being "slain." The redemption of sinners is based upon the suffering, bleeding, dying "Lamb."

The word "redeemed" means "purchased." It is a powerful New Testament word that pictures a slave being purchased in the marketplace for the purpose of being set free. At the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ paid the purchase price to redeem men from every "kindred" (descent) and "tongue" (language) and "people" (race) and "nation" (culture) from the slave market of sin (1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

Note: Religion is often cultural, racial, and national. Simply stated, if you are not a certain race, born in a certain place, or practice a certain belief system, you're out! Christianity is based on the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. Your language, your skin color, your status in life, your nation of origin doesn't prevent you from being saved.

The beasts and elders also sing because of Christ's transformation of men into "kings and priests." The reference to "kings and priests" occurs two other times in Revelation (1:6; 20:6). As previously mentioned, the "beasts" and "angels" referred to in this text are not redeemed and do not become "kings and priests." The words "hast made us" is a reference to the "twenty-four elders," or the redeemed church. The church is a priesthood rather than having a priesthood. The church is a royal family rather than a nation being ruled by a king. Those saved by grace will not be so much subjects of the kingdom as they will be reigning with Christ on the earth. Once again the purpose of God to fulfill the prophecies of an earthly kingdom in which Christ will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords is emphasized. The phrase "on the earth" is referring to the earthly millennial reign of Christ in which the church will reign with Christ. In this glorious earthly scene to follow the dark hour of the tribulation, the church will share the glory of Christ as joint heirs with Christ and sharers of His sovereign rule (Revelation 20:4-6).

Verse 11-12

"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

John continues to describe the worship of the Lamb that he witnesses in this heavenly scene by using his familiar words in Revelation, "And I beheld, and I heard." Over forty times in Revelation, John says he "I beheld" or "saw" something

and over twenty-five times he says he "I heard." Everything John "saw" and "heard" left a tremendous impression upon him.

John sees and hears "the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders." The collective number of those joining in the song of worship was "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." In concentric circles with the "Lamb" in the center surrounded by the living creatures and the twenty-four elders, the angelic hosts are seen on every side an innumerable host united in one mighty symphony of praise. John's point is that the "angels" join in collective voice with the "elders" and the "beasts" as they all say with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain..." This is the third time the word "slain" is mentioned in this scene (Revelation 5:6, 9, 12). Redemption is the "Lamb's work" and the "Lamb's praise!"

The heavenly worshippers elevate their praise to another level by attributing to Christ a sevenfold strain of adoration. To "receive" means "to take as a right." The seven words attributed to Christ are rightfully His and His alone! 1) Christ is worthy to receive praise and worship because of His "power." He is omnipotent (Psalm 62:11). 2) Christ is worthy to receive praise and worship because of His "riches." Christ owns and possess all things (Psalm 50:10-12). 3) Christ is worthy to receive praise and worship because of His "wisdom." Christ is omniscient (Luke 6:8). 4) Christ is worthy to receive praise and worship because of His "strength." Christ not only has power but strength to make it all happen (Philippians 4:13). 5) Christ is worthy to receive praise and worship because of His "honour." "Honor" refers to Christ's esteem, value, respect" (Psalm 89:7). 6) Christ is worthy to receive praise and worship because of His "glory." "Glory" refers to the public display of adoration that should be given to Christ again and again because of His person and work, past, present, and future (Psalm 29:2). 7) Christ is worthy to receive praise and worship because of His "blessing." "Blessing" refers to good words about Jesus. Christ is worthy of every good thing said about His redemptive work (Psalm 103:1-2; Malachi 3:16).

Verse 13

"And 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 honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

To this mighty chorus in heaven is added the praise of "every creature" on earth and under the earth and in the sea. John hears them all joining in blessing and praise to the One on the throne and to the Lamb. "In heaven" refers to the very place of God, His presence above. "On the earth" is a reference to the dry land. "Under the earth" may refer to the abode of the dead. "In the sea" is possibly a reference to anything existing elsewhere other than upon the dry land. John's point is not that we define each place he mentioned perfectly, but that we understand clearly that "every creature" wherever they might be found, is giving praise and glory to God and the "Lamb" forever!

Revelation 5:14 presents the climaxing scene of worship as the four living creatures pronounce their "*Amen.*" The twenty-four elders once again fall down and "*worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.*"

Conclusion

Bible preacher and author, Doctor Donald G. Barnhouse once wrote, "There are four things out of place in the universe: the church, which should be in heaven; Israel, which should be living in peace occupying all the land promised to her; Satan, who belongs in the lake of fire; and Christ, who should be seated on His throne reigning. All four of these will be set right when Christ takes the scroll from His Father's hand." Doctor Barnhouse was right!

If Jesus Christ is worthy to be enthroned over all the universe, is He not more worthy to be enthroned in your heart? He alone willingly humbled Himself and became obedient unto the death of the cross so sinners could be saved (Philippians 2:8). Without Christ, the Lamb of God, our sins would never have been take away (John 1:29). Without Christ, the Lamb of God, every day would be nothing but a day of guilt and sin. But with Christ, the Lamb of God, every day becomes an opportunity for sinners to be saved and for believers to worship Him afresh and experience His grace.

John saw angelic beings, those who had been redeemed and were a part of the church, and all creatures worshipping God and Christ in this heavenly scene. But what about you? Can you worship the Lord today for sacrificing His life for you at the cross? Have you trusted Him for salvation? If not, why not? And if not, will you today ask Christ to save you? When you ask, He will save you (Romans 10:13). Then you too can say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain...!"

Amen.

