

Place: Lurgan Baptist: 2:12:2003

Reading: Revelation 5:1-14

EXPLORING THE FUTURE

11. WORTHY IS THE LAMB

In the 1960's the late member of the Beatles, John Lennon who once claimed that his rock and roll music was more popular than Jesus Christ, wrote a song called "*Imagine*," which describes a world made perfect by the elimination of war and the elimination of religion. This song was revived in the 1990's as an anthem for a new generation of New Age influenced young people. They march in the streets singing, "*Imagine*," or Lennon's other peace anthem, "*Give peace a chance*," while carrying signs demanding peace, demanding plenty, demanding Utopia. Now there is nothing new about humanity's longing for Utopia. This wistful desire for a place where is no war, no poverty, no hunger, no hatred and no sorrow is the most universal and enduring passion of mankind. Utopian literature can be traced back as far as Plato around 400 B.C. and Euhemerus around 300 B.C. Some utopian dreamers have placed their hope in human reason as the cure for social evils, while others have suggested that the road to Utopia lies in reforming our economy.

A writer in a popular magazine once described what she thought a perfect world would be like,

***" No housework: no drug abuse: no prejudice
a relationship that works: more time with our families: a decent education for all:
clean air and water: a birth control pill for men: a care really built for families:
health, no aids: happiness, no war: and the pursuit of a family-friendly
workplace."***

That according to this writer would be a perfect world. Clearly she does not expect God to have very much to do with bringing this perfect world about. For there is only one hope for a utopian society, the person whose Birth was heralded some 2,000 years ago with the words, "***And on earth peace, good will toward men.***" (Lk 2:14) As we come to (Ch 5)chapter we find that we stand at the brink of the realisation of mankind's most elusive dream. And as we shall see, this dream is destined to be fulfilled not by economic reforms, human reason, or protest marches, but by the sovereign authority and dominion of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

" Chapter 5 of the book of Revelation continues the vision of the throne of heaven in the preceding chapter. John is now introduced to an item of central importance, namely a book which contains the prophecy of impending events to be unfolded in the Book of Revelation. The book is actually a scroll

(Greek, biblion), which is given prominence in the scene by the fact that is in the right hand of God who is on the throne. The importance and comprehensive character of the revelation contained is indicated by the fact that the book is written on both sides of the parchment. Further the document is made impressive by seven seals, apparently fixed on the edges of the scroll in such a way that the seals must be successively broken if the scroll is to be unrolled and read. Stauffer observes that the Roman law required a will to be sealed seven times as illustrated in the wills left by Augustus and Vespasian for their successors. "

Now in the previous chapter, John was caught up into heaven where he saw the Throne of God and the Court of Heaven. In (Ch 5) the scene is still in heaven, but the theme changes. In (Ch 4) the song in heaven is all about **Creation**, while in (Ch 5) the song in heaven is all about **Redemption**. Up to this point there has been no sign of the Lamb, but now He becomes the centre of everything. Our Lord steps into the spotlight and fills the stage of the universe, drawing every eye and prompting endless applause. Indeed we could write across this chapter, "*Worthy is the Lamb.*" Now in order to put a handle to our study I want you to notice here.

(1) THE TRAGIC WEAKNESS OF CIVILIZATION

A challenge is thrown out to all humanity. Who of all God's creatures is fit to rule the world ? Who has the right to the title deed of the earth ? Who is capable of leading us toward the solutions for our problems ? Who is smart enough ? Moral enough ? Strong enough ? Who is worthy ? The question lingers in the air of heaven like an accusation. No one steps forth. Throughout human history there have been those who considered themselves worthy to "*break the seals,*" to "*open the scroll,*" to carve out a man made Utopia on earth.

But even the best and most heroic leaders in history have not proven worthy to "*break the seals,*" to "*open the scroll,*" and to bring about a world of peace. That is (1) Who, then of all God's creatures is fit to rule the world ? Our attention is drawn to:

(a) THE SCROLL:

"A book," (5:1) literally it means a scroll. Now have a look at this scroll. Look at:

(1) THE SOURCE OF IT:

John says, "*And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.*" (5:1) This book is held tightly by God's omnipotent fist indicating its **Divine Source** and that it is God's to give to whomever He pleases. This is uniquely God's Book. But look at:

(2) THE IMPORTANCE OF IT:

This scroll is written on both sides front and back. Now the ancients hardly ever wrote on both sides of a scroll. Usually one side was for writing, while the back side was a rough, outer cover. Writing on both sides symbolised that message was full to overflowing, detailed, and extremely important. The mere fact that it is written down as opposed to being spoken indicates that it is unalterable, settled, and determined by God alone. In ancient times a scroll, like a Roman will was sealed by placing a single seal on the outer edge. But this scroll has seven seals one on the outside and six more on the inside. In other words, the scroll was partially rolled and then sealed, rolled some more and then sealed, rolled again and then sealed, until the seventh seal sealed the entire scroll. You see, this is a closed book, shut by seven seals, making it impossible for any man to open it, read it and then execute it's contents. So what's in this scroll ?

(3) THE MEANING OF IT:

I believe this scroll, which some find so mysterious is "*the title deed to the earth.*" This is the official document that will determine the outcome of human history. In this book are the final, end-time, cataclysmic judgments of God that will be poured out upon the earth during the Great tribulation. The One who possesses this book and can break its seals possesses the right to rule the world. Now bearing in mind that much of the symbolism of Revelation must be interpreted in the light of the Old Testament, there is an incident in the life of Jeremiah that throws some light on this passage.

(Jer 32:6-15) You see, Jeremiah was warned by God that Israel would be captured by the Babylonians and the people would be in captivity for 70 years. But God also tells the prophet to purchase a piece of land in Israel as a symbolic act, that some day they will retake possession of their land. So what happens ? Jeremiah buys a plot of land from his cousin. (Jer 32:9,10)

That is to say, Jeremiah wrote an agreement, then got witnesses, then sealed it so that there could be no tampering with it. There were actually two parts to this written agreement. One was given to a witness as a matter of public record, and the other was stored in a clay jar for safe keeping. This is the method God's people had for documenting purchases, and it is illustrative for the scroll in (Rev 5) For this book in the hand of God is a document redeeming the world. It is a sealed scroll, a legal document, belonging to the one who has paid the price and therefore has the legal right to open it and reveal what is written within.

It is the title deed to the earth. (Lk 21:28 Rom 8:21) Now the very context in (Rev 5) proves this. In (5:2) the call goes forth for an applicant to come and take the

scroll. John wept because no *man* was found worthy to do so. The *Sphere of man* is evidently in view. Then again, when the seals on the scroll are eventually broken, disasters overtake the earth. We read (6:2)

" *And he went forth conquering and to conquer.*" Where did he go forth to conquer ? The earth.

(6:5 7-8 12-15) You see, this book has something to do with the judgments of God that are yet to come on the earth. (Ezek 2:9-10 Dan 12:1-4)

My this world is spinning through space, headed toward a final, cataclysmic judgment. Have we forgotten that the Wrath of God is presently boiling over and one day will be unleashed on this ungodly world ! In the end, Heaven will prove to be triumphant over the earth. This Judgment during the Tribulation is written by God in His sacred scroll, already divinely ordained and predestined to occur. And the right to rule the earth is now to be decided at the Throne of God once and for all. For look at:

(b) THE SEARCH:

A challenge is thrown out. Who has the right to the title deed to the earth ? Who has paid the price to redeem it and can legally open those seals ? No-one answers. There is no one on earth, in heaven, or in hell who is worthy of opening it. Who is capable of solving our problems ? Who is competent to bring human history to its appointed end ? Who is qualified to overturn evil and make right all human injustices ? Who is fit to punish all wrong and reward right ? The question was not

" *Who is willing ?*" but " *who is worthy ?*" History is littered with fallen conquerors and their shattered dreams of a man made Utopia. Alexander the Great: Julius Caesar, Germany's Hitler, who envisioned a world-wide Reich that would last a thousand years: Iraq's Saddam Hussein who vowed to liberate the Islamic Holy Places in Jerusalem and Mecca and who dreamed of uniting the entire Moslem world from North Africa to Asia under his rule.

" *Who is worthy ?*" No one in Washington has the answers. No one in Moscow. No one in London, Baghdad, Tel Aviv, or Tokyo can deliver us from our problems. No one can execute Gods plan for human history. We are hopeless and helpless to usher in the Golden Age. Our problems are beyond us. No wonder John wept. His troubled heart was filled with deep distress. There was:

(c) THE SOB:

Why does John weep ? (5:4) Because he knows that this world needs ***Redemption***. The world needs a leader and the scroll must be opened and the seals broken for Gods purpose's to be fulfilled. John's tears represent the weeping of all God's people down through the centuries. These are our tears longing for God to make a disordered world right. But as the old apostle stood there with tears streaming down his lined

weather beaten face one of the elders got up and said, “ *Weep not.* “ Then in a voice that must have pulsed with the anticipation of victory he announced, “ *behold the Lion of the Tribe of Judah the Root of David hath prevailed to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof.* “ (5:5)

“ *John, there is one man who is able. There is one man in all the universe Who is worthy in God’s eyes to rule the world. Only one. The man Christ Jesus.* “

My if the Lord Jesus is able to rule the world and He is, is He not able to rule your life and mine ? Why is it that we settle for an unworthy lord ? We allow ourselves to be ruled by our emotions, or the opinions of others, or our business, our career, our bank account. My If God says Christ is able to fulfil His purpose for the entire human race, is He not able to fulfil God’s purpose for your life ? What is God’s eternal solution for the world ? Well, turn from (1) to:

(2) THE TRIUMPHANT WORTHINESS OF CHRIST

John is told not to cry, there is good news. Someone has been found who can open that scroll and read it. Someone is worthy and has paid the price to redeem the world. The only solution that exists to the human dilemma is our Lord Jesus Christ. Notice that John’s attention is directed to:

(a) THE PERSON OF OUR LORD:

" *Behold the lion* " (5:5) Can you see here, The **MAJESTY of the Lord Jesus**: Like a lion ferocious, courageous, fearless, king, mighty, majestic. This Lion of Judah is Jesus Christ. For He alone is able to break the seals, open the scroll and execute its events. " *Of the tribe of Judah* " This is **The ROYALTY of the Lord Jesus**. The tribe of Judah was the tribe of David from which the kingly line proceeded. (Gen 49:9-10) It was to this tribe that the promise was given of a Son whose throne and kingdom would endure forever.

(2 Sam 7:13-16) But don’t stop here, for Christ was of

" *The root of David* " This is **The Eternality of the Lord Jesus**. For He who came After David as the offspring of David was also Before David as the root.

(22:16) This points to Christ's eternal pre-existence.

" *Hath prevailed* " This is **The VICTORY of the Lord Jesus**. For this regal Lion eternal, divine, yet completely human won the Victory at Calvary in order to open this scroll. But look at:

(b) THE POSITION OF OUR LORD:

How could John have ever missed Him ? There He was, in the midst all the time. (5:6) Perhaps John did not notice him at first because he was struck by the beauty of

the rainbow, or he was amazed at the story of the scroll, but somehow John failed to recognise the Saviour. Yet the Lamb was in the midst of it all.

(Matt 18:20) How often we do the same. We come and go to meetings, we listen to the most stirring messages, sing the most sublime hymns and yet miss the Lord in the midst. Isn't that possible even in a study like this ?

To be so caught up with prophecy that you fail to see whom the prophecy glorifies.

Myin the midst of all these events is the Lamb of God. He is central to everything in the Book of Revelation. John next became aware of:

(c) THE PASSION OF OUR LORD:

He turns to see a **LION**, but instead he saw **A LAMB**. John must have wondered, "*This is the solution to the world's problems ? A lowly lamb ? A weak, submissive lamb.*" Precisely. The answer to mans problems is the Lamb of God Jesus Christ. The Lion-Lamb. The Sovereign Saviour. What a combination of meekness and majesty. The Lord Jesus is spoken of as "*the Lamb*," at least 28 times in the book of Revelation. God's anger is depicted as "*the wrath of the Lamb*," (6:16) cleansing is "*by the blood of the Lamb*,"

(7:14) the church is seen as "*the bride of the Lamb*,"

(19:7) the massed choirs of heaven praise Him with a song titled, "*Worthy is the Lamb*," (5:12) Now there are two very interesting words is. The first is "**Lamb**." In Greek there are two words for Lamb. One describes a lamb in general. (amnos) the other means a pet lamb.

(arnion) You see, Satan is described as a dragon

(12:9) with his hordes of mighty demons supporting him, but God is so powerful that all he requires to defeat Satan is a little pet lamb.

The second interesting word here is "**slain**." (sphazo)" It means to cut up and mutilate an animal sacrifice. It describes the gory crucifixion of our Lord Jesus. Thorns pierced His skull. A whip lacerated His back. Fists bruised His face. Nails gouged His hands. A spear tore His side. Blood and water came gushing out. And now in Heaven the marks of our Lord's death are still there, imprinted in His resurrected body for all eternity.

A Sunday School teacher of young boys once asked her class, "*Is there anything manmade in heaven ?*" To her surprise one of the boys spoke up and said, "*Yes Ma'am there is. What could possibly be in heaven that is manmade ?*" she asked. "*The nail prints in Jesus hands*," the little boy replied. My what Thomas saw in the Upper Room, what John looked upon in heaven, we too shall see in Glory for we'll never forget Calvary.

"*I shall know Him by the print of the nails in His hand.*" But John discovers even something more strange. For this Lamb, who was violently slaughtered and put to death, is actually **Standing**. Having being killed, He is now alive **Again**. That's:

(d) THE PERFORMANCE OF OUR LORD:

Christ died with all the vestures of *Defeat*. A cross. A crown of thorns. A jeering mob. A black sky. An agonising cry. But then came Sunday morning and with it the glorious report, "*He is not here, but is RISEN.*" (Lk 24:6) "*The head that once was crowned with crowns is crowned with glory now.*" When you flick back in your Bible to Hebrews (Ch 1) you find the Lamb is seated at the Father's right hand, his work of redemption is finished. The job He came to do at Calvary is complete. But here in (5:6) we see Him standing. For His is an ongoing mission in relation to the world. But John sees something else. "*A Lamb having seven horns.*" (5:6) You see, that's:

(e) THE POWER OF OUR LORD:

In the Bible, an animals horns speak of its power to ram, butt, gore and defeat its enemies and seven is the number of perfection. Sevens horns means *Omnipotence*. The Lord Jesus will have no trouble opening the scroll and executing the seven seal judgments: (6:1 - 8:5) the seven trumpet judgments: (8:6 - 19:21) and the seven vial judgments. (16:1 - 19:21) for He is the omnipotent God. John noted something else, "*A Lamb having seven eyes.*" (5:6) That's,

(f) THE PERCEPTION OF OUR LORD:

Gods Lamb is omniscient. Full of intelligence. Possessing perfect discernment. He has perfect knowledge of all things past, present, and future. This is one Lamb who can't have the wool pulled over His eyes. (Is: 11:2-4) Now look at what happens in this dramatic moment in Heaven. The Lamb came "*and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne.*" (5:7) You see, that's

(g) THE PREROGATIVES OF OUR LORD:

Suppose for a moment the question had been asked Christ, "*What is the basis of Your claim to the title deed of earth ?*" His reply could have been threefold. He could have said, "*That world is mine by RIGHT OF CREATION, for I made it: it is mine of by RIGHT OF CALVARY for I redeemed it: it is mine by RIGHT OF CONQUEST, for I'm going back to claim that world in war.*" My as Christ steps into the spotlight His right is instantly owned. Now from the moment the Lamb is out into the picture, John cannot take his eyes off Him. He mentions Him again and again in this chapter.

(5:6,8,12,13) He is the centrepiece of Heaven. "*The Lamb is all the glory of Emmanuel's land.*" Tell me is Christ the centrepiece of your life ? Does everything in

your life revolve around Him ? He created you, He bought you at Calvary with precious blood, and He is the only One who has the right to rule your life. Would you yield the reins of your life to Him ? Will you allow Him to rule and reign as Undisputed Sovereign in your life ? Will you crown Him Lord of all ? But look at how this passage ends. For when the Lamb is introduced worship is immediately given to Him. (1) (2)

(3) THE THRILLING WORSHIP OF CREATION

For as the Lamb takes the book, all heaven erupts in worship. To worship means “ *to ascribe worth*,” and Christ alone is worthy. Here is worship as it was meant to be, alive, dynamic, genuine, passionate. Look at:

(a) THE SOURCE OF THIS WORSHIP:

What we have in (Rev 5) are expanding circles of His worshippers. Notice first the Lord Jesus is immediately worshipped by those ***Around the Throne***. The four beasts and the twenty four elders. (5:8-10) Then Christ is worshipped through out ***All Heaven***. (5:11-12) Finally He is worshipped throughout ***All the Universe***. (5:13-14) The creatures at the throne worship Him. The countless angel throng worship Him. The whole universe worship Him. (Phil 2:9-11) Because He is Worthy to be Worshipped ! Did you notice this worship was JOYFUL ? The elders each had a harp. When Israel came under the judgement of God and was carried off into captivity, she hung up her harp. (Ps 137:1) She had no song. She was living outside the will of God and she had lost her joy. When did you hang up your harp ? My when you resist God’s will for your life and insist on your own way, you can lose your joy. Did you notice this worship was HOPEFUL ? “ *They sung a new song*,” it was about Christ’s rightful claim to rule the world because He alone is worthy. Did you notice this worship was THANKFUL ? For memories of Calvary are precious in heaven. Indeed,

(b) THE SUBJECT OF THIS WORSHIP:

Is Christ ! In (5:9) the elders ***Sing***, in (5:12) the angels ***Say***, but their theme is similar. “ ***Worthy is the Lamb***.” (5:12) Isaac once asked: “ ***WHERE is the Lamb*** ?” (Gen 22:7) John the Baptist then answered: “ ***BEHOLD the Lamb***.” (Jn 1:29) All creation now says: “ ***WORTHY is the Lamb***.” (5:12) There are some denominations who have gone through their hymnals and taken out all the songs about the blood of Christ. But the reason He is worthy is because of Calvary. In (Ch 4) the theme was, “ ***Thou art worthy for Thou hast created***.” (4:11) But now the worship is lifted an octave higher. “ ***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." (5:9-10)

Sir Robert Anderson says: "*Eternity in the PAST knew no other future than Calvary's Cross: eternity in the future will know no other PAST than Calvary's Cross.*" My in that bright scene of splendour, far beyond the skies, they worship Him. They worship Him as the Lamb that was slain. Its Calvary that fills their vision and prompts their worship. Over yonder at this moment they are doing what we do when we worship Him when we spread the Table and remember Him.

For,

*" When in scenes of glory
I sing the new new song
Twill be the same old story
That I have loved so long,"*

My Christ is the centrepiece of Heaven. All heaven revolves around Him. Is Christ the centrepiece of your life ? Does everything in your life revolve around Him ? Where has he lost pre-eminence in your life ? Your thought life ? Your business ? Your service ? Your marriage ? Will you allow Christ to assume His rightful place in your life afresh ? Make Christ the centrepiece of your life. Crown Him Lord of all. For over yonder at this very moment they are worshipping Him now. They are crying, "**WORTHY IS THE LAMB.**" We exalt Him. We adore Him. We worship Him. We love Him. We want no other. We desire no other. We will have no other. We will love no other. "*Worthy is the Lamb.*" And what a day it will be when the church is taken home and all heaven breaks loose in worship.

*" Oh, that with yonder sacred throng,
We at His feet may fall,
Join in the everlasting song,
And crown Him Lord of all."*