

A WORTHY RESPONSE TO THE ONE WHO IS WORTHY

5 Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and tightly sealed with seven seals. 2And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" 3But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or even look at it. 4I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or [even] look at it. 5Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Look! The Lion who is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, he has overcome, and he is able to open the scroll and break the seals."

6Then I saw a lamb, [looking] as though it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, surrounded by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7He came and took [the scroll] out of the right hand of him who sat on the throne. 8When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before [him]. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9And they sing a new song, saying, "You are worthy to take the scroll and break the seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10You have made them into a kingdom and priests for our God, and they shall reign over the earth." 11Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders. The number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand; indeed, [there were] thousands upon thousands [of them]. 12With a loud voice they proclaim, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive the power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" 13Then I heard every creature that is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and in the sea, together with everything that is in [all these places], proclaiming, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, be the blessing and the honor and the glory and the dominion forever and ever!" 14The four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the elders fell down and worshiped. (Rev. 5:1-14)

Introduction

Do you realize how little appreciation, honor, and respect the Lord Jesus Christ receives today? People constantly take His name in vain; either flippantly using His great name merely as an expression of exclamation, or as a means of expressing their anger.

Whereas it is considered insensitive to make anyone or any group the object of deprecating humor or abuse, this does not apply to Christ. By way of example: A T.V. documentary, without comment, aired the segment of a motivational speaker as he made the Lord Jesus Christ the object of his deprecating humor and as his audience laughed uproariously. If anyone else or any group had been the object of such humor it would have been considered to be highly offensive and intolerable.

Another way in which the Lord Jesus is deprived of His rightful glory and honor is by the assertion that there are many ways to God—many “saviors.” As this baseless and false teaching is proclaimed, the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus Christ as the only true Savior sent by God is disparaged and denied.

In contrast to all this abuse and disparagement by the world, we come to Revelation chapter five. This chapter of Scripture teaches us that the Lord Jesus Christ alone is recognized by God as worthy to be our Savior and worthy to receive the glory. Because the Lord Jesus has proven Himself to be our great and only Savior, let us respond to Him in a way that is worthy of Him.

I. Respond to Christ by Rejoicing in Him

The Apostle John reports that he saw in the right hand of God “*a scroll*” (vs. 1.) The very position of this scroll, in God’s right hand, indicates that its contents are of supreme honor and blessing and importance; note, for instance, Ephesians 1:20-21 for the significance of the position at God’s right hand: “*[God] raised [Christ] from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹far above every rule and authority and power and dominion and every title that can be given, not only in this present age but also in the coming age.*”

John goes on to tell us that this scroll was written “*on both sides.*” This fact indicates that this scroll is filled to capacity and is, indeed, overflowing with the blessings of God. Its contents are nothing other than the glorious kingdom of God, as it will be described in Revelation 21-22. But, it is also a scroll that has been “*tightly sealed with seven seals.*” Laid upon the scroll is a divine and absolute seal, making its contents inaccessible and unobtainable to men.

The reason for the divine seal is due to the sinfulness, and therefore, the unworthiness, of fallen mankind. The divine requirement for life and access to the blessing of God is obedience, originating from a pure heart: “*Who may ascend the hill of Jehovah? Who may stand in his holy place? ⁴He who has clean hands and a pure heart*” (Psalm 24:3-4a.) The punishment for disobedience and unrighteousness is banishment from the presence and blessing of God: “[*Jehovah*] *drove the man out; and he placed the Cherubim at the east of the Garden of Eden, and [also] a flaming sword which turned in every direction, to guard the way to the tree of life*” (Gen. 3:24.)

As John ponders the situation, he sees a mighty angel proclaiming in a great voice, “*Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?*” (vs. 2.) Here is “*a mighty angel*” earnestly and diligently seeking for someone to come and open the scroll, to open the gate to the kingdom of heaven—not even this mighty angel is able to do so! Depicted here is the earnest desire of God to share His kingdom with men and to receive us into His divine fellowship. But although such is the desire of God’s heart, not even that divine desire can nullify the fact that the scroll is sealed and can only be opened by one who is worthy. Here is what we might call “the

divine tension:” In His love, God desires for us to gain entrance into His heavenly kingdom; but in His holiness, God cannot admit sinful men into His presence without a Savior.

In response to the mighty angel’s question, *“Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?”* there comes the reply, *“No one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or [even] look at it”* (vs. 4.) There is not found one soul in all of the world who is worthy and able to open the scroll; indeed, none is found to even so much as look upon the scroll; in the words of the Apostle Paul, quoting from Psalm 14:1, *“There is none righteous, no, not one ... ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Rom. 3:10,23.)

In response to this dilemma, John testifies, *“I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll.”* His heart is filled with sorrow over the moral unworthiness of mankind to gain entrance into the kingdom of heaven. When he sees the tragic and awful consequence of sin, that it deprives us of the blessing of God and bars us from entrance into the kingdom of God and His divine fellowship, John breaks down and weeps. But as the Apostle John weeps in sorrow and despair, he suddenly hears a voice that exhorts him, *“Do not weep”* (vs. 5.) John is informed that there is One who has been found worthy—he is now pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us respond to Christ by rejoicing in Him. When we look at ourselves and how our sinfulness has disqualified us from the kingdom of heaven, it should put us to grief; but when we look at the Savior whom God has provided, and put our trust in Him, it should cause us to rejoice. Along with Mary, may we sing, *“My soul magnifies the LORD ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior ... ⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name”* (Lk. 1:46-49.)

II. Respond to Christ by Appreciating Him

The Lord Jesus Christ is introduced to John and to us as *“the lion who is from the tribe of Judah”* (vs. 5.) In Genesis 49:8-10 Judah is pictured as a conquering lion, and there is the prophecy that from his tribe would eventually come the Almighty Conqueror and Victor:

Judah, your brothers shall praise you. Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons shall bow down before you. ⁹Judah is a lion’s cub; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him? ¹⁰The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs, to him shall be the obedience of the nations. (Gen. 49:8-10)

Referring to our Lord Jesus Christ, the writer of Hebrews asserts, *“it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah”* (Heb. 7:14a.)

The Lord Jesus is further identified as *“the Root of David.”* David was the divinely appointed king who ruled over God’s earthly kingdom, the Old Testament nation of Israel; but here is One who is greater than David, One who is the Source of David’s life and reign. Note: The fact that our Lord Jesus Christ is from *“the tribe of Judah”* shows His humanity (in His incarnation He became a true man; and the fact that He is *“the Root of David”* testifies to His divinity, He is God Himself.

John is now comforted by the fact that this Lion (Christ Jesus) *“has overcome, and he is able to open the scroll and break the seals.”* Here is the only One who has conquered the devil and the world—our Lord Jesus Christ was victorious where Adam and all of us who are the descendants of Adam failed. The Greek verb, (translated by the phrase, “he overcame,”) by its emphatic position at the beginning of the clause and by its tense (the Greek aorist tense indicating one past event,) underscores the certainty and the totality of Christ’s conquest, as well as emphasizing the one great act of obedience to His Father by which that conquest was won, namely, the cross of Calvary.

Thus John is comforted by the Good News that the lion from the tribe of Judah has conquered; but what he now sees before the throne is not a lion, but *“a lamb”!* (vs. 6.) The lamb reveals the fact that the Savior’s victory was accomplished not by personal strength and the assertion of Himself, but rather by the complete submission of Himself to His Father’s will. In the Garden of Gethsemane, as He anticipated the cross of Calvary, our Lord Jesus Christ prayed to His Father, *“My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will”* (Matt. 26:39.) The Lamb of God accomplished the work of redemption by the offering of Himself as the one true sacrifice for sin:

... you were redeemed from your futile way of life handed down from your forefathers—not by perishable things, such as silver or gold,¹⁹ but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish or defect, [the blood] of Christ. (1 Pet. 1:18-19)

Note carefully the position of the Lamb. He is standing *“at the center of the throne,”* and at the same time he is *“surrounded by the four living creatures and the elders”* (vs. 6.) By means of His position, He is identified with God His Father as the eternal Son who by His perfect righteousness is well pleasing to the Father, and He is also identified with His people for whom He died. Speaking of Christ’s relationship to the redeemed, the writer to the Hebrews reports, *“he is not ashamed to call them brothers”* (Heb. 2:11.) The lamb is seen standing at the center of the throne, even though he looked *“as though he been slain”* (vs. 6a.) Here is a reference to our Lord’s resurrection—His resurrection being proof that His sacrifice was acceptable to God and, consequently, totally sufficient for our salvation.

John reports that the Lamb had *“seven horns and seven eyes.”* The *“seven horns”* represent almighty power, strength, dominion, and authority; as Moses testifies

of the LORD: *“his horns are the horns of a wild ox. With them he will gore the nations, even those at the ends of the earth”* (Deut. 33:17.) *“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me’”* (Matt. 28:18.) The *“seven eyes,”* defined as *“the seven Spirits of God,”* are a reference to the Holy Spirit, given to Christ who in turned has bestowed Him upon His church. Referring to the Lord Jesus, on the day of Pentecost the Apostle Peter declares, *“Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear”* (Acts 2:33.)

As John watches, the Lamb *“came and took [the scroll] out of the right hand of him who sat on the throne”* (vs. 7.) The use of the Greek perfect tense in the verb, “he took,” indicates a past act or action that has continued merit and effectiveness—our Lord’s victory at Calvary is all-sufficient and eternally sufficient for our salvation: *“he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them”* (Heb. 7:25.)

Let us respond to Christ by appreciating Him: Let us appreciate the wonder of who He is—He is none other than God incarnate. Let us appreciate the wonder of what He has done—He has conquered the devil and opened the kingdom of heaven for us. Let us appreciate Him by putting our trust in Him and entrusting our whole lives to Him.

III. Respond to Christ by Praising Him

In verse 7 God the Father acknowledges the worthiness of Christ by allowing Him to take the scroll.

Then in verse 8 the angelic host and the redeemed, (represented by the twenty-four elders,) acknowledge His worthiness by bowing down before Him. Each of the elders had *“a harp;”* the symbol of praising God the Father **for** our Lord Jesus Christ. Each one also had *“a golden bowl full of incense;”* representing the fact that they are praying to God the Father **through** our Lord Jesus Christ—the bowls full of incense represent the prayers of the church as they are offered up to God the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The twenty-four elders sing a new song of praise to the Lamb (vs. 9-10.) They sing, *“You were slain.”* Their song focuses upon the great fact and event that took place at Calvary. They continue by saying, *“with your blood you purchased men for God.”* Here is the divinely-inspired interpretation of Calvary—our Lord’s death upon the cross was not a martyrdom, nor was it merely an expression of love, it was the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Speaking of Jesus, the Apostle John declares, *“He is the propitiation for our sins”* (1 Jn. 2:2.) A “propitiation” is a sacrifice that satisfies the divine justice and appeases the divine wrath. The elders’ song goes on to say, *“You have made them into a kingdom and priests for our God.”* Here is the divine purpose of Calvary: the redeemed are made into a kingdom of willing subjects who submit themselves to God’s sovereign and

gracious rule; and the redeemed are made to be priests of God, thereby becoming actively engaged in service to Him. Their song concludes with the testimony, *“they shall reign over the earth.”* The redeemed actively share with God and Christ in their dominion—by virtue of Christ’s atoning work, the original creation mandate—*“Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth”* (Gen. 1:28)—will be fully and perfectly realized in the new creation.

John now writes, *“Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders. The number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, indeed, [there were] thousands upon thousands [of them]”* (vs. 11.) All the host of heaven joins in singing the praises of the Lamb (vs. 12.) Note: The host of heaven address the Lamb in the third person (as is the case also in verse 13,) whereas the redeemed, represented by the twenty-four elders, address Him in the second person: *“You are worthy to take the scroll and break the seals”* (vs. 9.) Only the redeemed have the status of being the bride of Christ and the status of being the adopted sons of God. In their hymn of praise the heavenly host heaps up every conceivable expression of homage, all to emphasize the supreme worthiness of the Lamb: *“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive the power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”*

The worthiness of the Lamb sung by the redeemed (vs. 8-10,) and taken up by the angels (vs. 12,) is finally acknowledged by the whole creation (vs. 13.) John is here witnessing the fulfillment of Philippians 2:9-11; the whole world shall finally be compelled to acknowledge and honor Christ as Lord to the glory of God the Father:

Therefore, God exalted him to the highest position and bestowed upon him the name that is above every name; ¹⁰so that before the name Jesus [now] possesses “every knee should bow”—in heaven and on earth and under the earth—¹¹“and every tongue confess” that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:9-11)

John notes that the *“four living creatures said, ‘Amen!’ And the elders fell down and worshiped”* (vs. 14.) The pronouncement of the *“Amen”* by the four living creatures represents God the Father acknowledging His Son’s worthiness to receive the glory; just as He did at the commencement of our Lord’s earthly ministry: *“a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased”* (Matt. 3:17.) The redeemed, (again, being represented by the twenty-four elders,) respond by prostrating themselves in complete worship and submission.

Let us respond to Christ by praising Him: praising Him with the heavenly host and the redeemed who have gone on to glory; praising Him that finally He will

be vindicated and acknowledged as Lord; and praising Him with our lips and with our lives.

Conclusion

Do we appreciate the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ alone is recognized by God as worthy to be our Savior? Because He has proven Himself to be the only One who is worthy, let us respond to Him in a way that is worthy of Him: 1) let us rejoice in Him; 2) let us appreciate Him; and 3) let us praise Him.