

The Scroll & The Lamb
Revelation 5:1-14
#10 in a Series on What Jesus Is Saying to the Church
Faith Community Church, October 7, 2007

Introduction

1. Please open your Bibles to Revelation 5.
2. We love stories about heroes.
3. We love the homerun in the bottom of the 9th, a last-second touchdown pass into the end-zone. We sing the praises of police and firefighters who risk it all to save lives, or the company of soldiers who lead a daring rescue behind enemy lines.
4. There is something universally appealing about someone who emerges when the chips are down and snatches victory from defeat. We immortalize that kind of person in our movies and our literature.
5. Revelation 5 is a story about a hero. It's a true story. It hasn't happened yet, but someday it will. And God allows this look into the future for our encouragement.
6. Read Revelation 5 & pray

The Scroll & The Lamb

- Review chapter 4 – John's vision of the throne in heaven.
 - Let's review chapter 5
1. What John Sees.
 - a. The first thing that John sees is a scroll – verse 1
 - i. The scroll contains writing on both sides and is closed up by 7 seals – probably wax that has been melted on the scroll to secure it.
 - ii. This kind of scroll would be familiar to the readers because it is similar to legal documents such as wills or deeds.
 - iii. The scroll is in the hand of God.
 - b. Next, John sees the search for a champion
 - i. An angel issues a challenge – “Who is worthy to open the scroll?”
 - ii. But no one in the entire creation was found worthy.
 - iii. John weeps in despair, knowing that unless someone worthy is found, the contents of this important scroll will remain hidden.
 - iv. But one of the 24 elders comforts him. The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David – both titles of the Messiah, Jesus – is worthy to open the scroll and break the seals.
 - c. John looks and sees a Lamb
 - i. The lamb stands, alive, but it has been slain.
 - ii. He has seven horns, representing perfect power, and seven eyes, representing perfect knowledge.
 - iii. He takes the scroll, prompting the four living creatures and twenty four elders to fall down before him.

- iv. These angelic beings sing a “new song,” declaring the Lamb – Jesus – to be worthy because he has died, and by his death he has ransomed people from every people group to be a kingdom and priests to God.
- d. Suddenly John looks beyond the throne room and sees innumerable angels and every creature – every person and every angelic being (both angels and demons) and perhaps every animal in creation – praising God and the Lamb. And the four living creatures say, “Amen” – “may it be so” – and the 24 elders fall down and worship.

What a scene! Christ, the champion, is worthy to open the scroll! But what does it mean? Why does John tell us about this?

2. What the Vision Says to Us.

The purpose of the vision is to encourage the church – those Christians living in John’s day and Christians living today. So let’s see what the vision says to us.

- a. The first thing we see is that God holds the future.
 - i. The scroll is the one of the two major focal points in this chapter. But what is it? What is inside?
 - ii. Biblical scholars suggest several options, but the context of this passage reveals what it is.
 - iii. Look ahead to chapter 6 and see what happens when the seals are broken. Each broken seal releases an act of God’s judgment upon the world.
 - iv. Bear in mind that chapters 6-18 record events that occur immediately prior to Christ’s return (chapter 19).
 - v. The scroll then, represents the authority to enact God’s judgment upon the earth, wrap up human history, and bring in the promised kingdom.
 - vi. Therefore it assures us that history is in the hand of God.
- b. A second lesson from the vision is that Christ is our hope.
 - i. He alone, by virtue of his death and what it accomplished, is worthy to enact the plan of God. The suffering Savior is also the sovereign Savior.
 - ii. Picture yourself as a Christian in the first century Roman empire. With all that was against you, where would you turn for hope? To Christ.
 - iii. There is an important lesson for Christians in the United States.
 - 1. We see a world that Paul describes in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 and Matthew 24:3-12. Where do we turn for hope?
 - 2. Sometimes it appears that our hope is in a political party, a presidential candidate or a Christian action group to take us back to the good old days. But remember – the good old days weren’t all that good. Or have you forgotten?

3. If you put your hope in someone or something other than Christ, you've made that person and idol, because only Christ will make things right.
- c. A third lesson is that our prayers have meaning.
 - i. This is a side issue in the text, but notice in verse 8 that the elders each have "golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."
 - ii. What is that about? Several weeks ago we watched an excellent video in Sunday School by Dr. Ligon Duncan on the subject of "Why Pray if God is Sovereign." While there is no place in Scripture that indicates that our prayers shape or change God's plan, it seems clear that in his sovereign rule that, as Duncan said, God orders the affairs of the universe through the prayers of his people."
 - iii. What kind of prayer? Well, perhaps he is referring to what Jesus said we should pray in Matthew 6:9-10. Perhaps it is a response to what God is accomplishing in us, as we read in Ephesians 1:3-23.
 - iv. How often do we pray for God's will to be done through the work of the Gospel, through your church, in our lives?
 - v. Our prayers have meaning.
 - d. A final point is that it is all about Jesus.
 - i. What's all about Jesus? Life. Really? Isn't that fanaticism?
 - ii. I speak often about living life to the glory of God because that is why we are here. That is what we were made to do, it is what we are called to do, and it is what we will be judged for.
 - iii. We see here a day when what Paul tells us about in Philippians 2:8-11 will be fulfilled. Look at what Paul says and then read again the description of the worship of all creatures (NASB – "every created thing.")
 - iv. Does that bother you, or do you look forward to a day in which all of life will be perfectly ordered around the worthiness and supremacy of Christ?

Conclusion

One of our great challenges is to live out the perspective that Scripture gives us on life, on the meaning of life and on the future. Look at this world, and what a mess we have around us. Can anyone rescue us? Jesus can. He's the hero who delivers us from death and all that death involves.

If you have never trusted in Christ as your Savior, God calls you to repent of your sin and embrace Christ by faith. I hope that you will do that today before the time is too late.