

Sermon

“Worthy is the Lamb” (Revelation 5:8-14)

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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our **Risen** Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! As I warned you last Sunday: don't let anyone try to convince you that the book of Revelation should be treated as a *scary* book. This book is about the *victory* of our Risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ over everything that stands against His Kingdom and His Kingdom people, all of you! This book is about the victory of our Savior Jesus over sin, death, and the power of the devil. This is why Revelation -- when properly interpreted -- is extraordinarily comforting!

What lends to the mishandling of this unique literature (genre) called “apocalyptic” is that too many popular teachers assume that the book is *primarily* about *future* events. And while there are indeed *some* future events, the *emphasis* is *not* future, but *what has already been accomplished by our Savior Jesus!*

Revelation *repeats* in celebratory fashion – in a circular; over-and-over again approach – the great victory that **Jesus has already accomplished!** The Bible is written this way and reflects more of an eastern way of thinking over and above a western way of thinking. The 7 seals (Revelation 6f.) and 7 trumpets (Revelation 8f.) and 7 bowls (Revelation 15f.) are *cyclical* presentations of sin and death which have been overcome by the triumph of Jesus Christ (even while the great last Day is included in these cycles).

This cyclical way is hard for some Americans to understand. For example, in the Old Testament which serves as the foundation for Revelation, the people of Israel when they celebrated a wedding (and this is to say nothing of the year-long betrothal period), had a celebration *after* consummation that went on for *seven* days. Imagine that, a *seven-day* wedding celebration! Some pragmatic Americans would say that a wedding celebration lasting for more than a few hours is too much, but the cyclical celebration in the Old Testament was the only way to go!

And did you notice that number seven?! Stemming from last week's sermon on Revelation chapter 1 which brought out the significance of the number seven and its theme of completeness (in Christ you're a seven, praise God!), we are reminded that Revelation is full of symbols and figurative language. If you miss these things, then Revelation becomes utterly misinterpreted and leads people to a frightening and horrific picture of the future. The *Left Behind* series of 16 novels written by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins between 1995 and 2007 sold over 70 million copies in the United States. This was *not* an anomaly as the best-selling book in the U.S. for the entire decade of the 1970's was Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*. And long before that, the Scofield Bible which first appeared in 1909 took America by storm with misleading study notes.

These present a false view of Revelation and a terrible understanding of the rapture (though this teaching is by far *the* understanding in Pop-American Christianity). Much to the embarrassment of this view, however, is that it turns the biblical teaching of “left behind” upside

down! To be “left” is another expression of “to pardon” or “to forgive” (Matt. 6:12; Luke 11:4), but to be “taken” in Scripture means to be “seized” or “taken prisoner” (Matt. 24:40-41; Luke 17:34-35). So the popular teaching of the rapture warns people to NOT be left behind, but in the biblical view, you very much should WANT to be left behind and not taken prisoner for condemnation! The *Left Behind* series is full of false doctrine and misrepresents the Word of God. [see my doctoral dissertation on our website www.saintpaulsirvine.com under “biblical resources” and then “discipleship courses,” and then go to “discipleship course 10” and then scroll to the very bottom for the dissertation]

All of this is a reminder that false views of Revelation produce sheer horror. To complement the *Left Behind* novel series, a comic-book or “graphic novel” series was published and this is the inside cover of book 1, volume 1 (a picture which is said to predict your future)!



Talk about a bad hair day. These are the faces of those witnessing utter chaos and destruction as planes fall from the sky and while our cities are destroyed. These are said to be literal fulfillments of the so-called “prophecies” of the book of Revelation which predict the horrendous suffering of those “left behind.” This version of left behind and rapture is WRONG!

In the course of my teaching about this, I simply cannot tell you how often I’ve heard this kind of response: ***“But what difference does it make? The important thing is that Jesus is coming again!”***

Dear Christians, I can’t begin to tell how misleading and how dangerous such an attitude really is. Of course our Savior is coming again in great glory on the Last Day, but ***how we teach about the current glory of Jesus right now makes all the difference in the world for the people of God who must live in the world right now!***

The futuristic idea implies that things are still out of control and it waits for the final victory of Christ. What does such thinking imply? It quite simply implies that Jesus – our Savior – is still in some way lacking or is not completely victorious. This view would have us believe that in the meantime Satan still reigns and that what Revelation describes about Jesus in terms of His glory is still in the future. Not so.

In Revelation 5 and before our epistle text this morning, Jesus is presented as ***“a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes...”*** (vs 6). *You*

know *who* the Lamb is! He is Jesus! And He is called “Lamb,” because the clean lamb without blemish qualified for the Old Testament sacrifices for making atonement for the sins of the people. Jesus is the ultimate Lamb, the ultimate sacrifice whose blood atoned for the sin of the world! The complete Lamb with complete power = the symbolism of the seven horns; and with complete wisdom = the symbolism of the seven eyes.



But take a look at Revelation 5:12. Let’s read together what the myriad of angels are chanting about Christ:

“saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!’”

There is something which immediately stands out: what makes Jesus worthy of these amazing superlatives is that He is the Lamb ***“who was slain”***! This of course refers to His finished victory; to His accomplished death and resurrection which bound Satan and freed us from our sins. The binding of Satan is not in the future, because by the blood that Jesus spilled on the cross and by His powerful resurrection and defeat of death, Satan is bound right now. So much so that all the child of God has to do is “resist him” and the devil will run from that Christian, he will run from you (James 4:7) because you are in Christ the Victor...not merely the *future* Victor, but the ***current and complete*** Victor! That’s how powerful a child of God is who has upon their lips and upon their hearts and minds the Name of the Lamb who was slain!

This is not merely future victory, this is current victory, because Jesus reigns not *partially* today, but ***completely*** today!

But there’s that seven again and this time it isn’t simply describing the Church and God’s people, but this time it is thoroughly describing Christ. The 7 horns, the 7 eyes and then in our epistle, this is a 7-fold ascription of praise. Jesus “receives” or “takes” through His death and resurrection for us:

1. Power
2. Wealth
3. Wisdom
4. Might
5. Honor

6. Glory
7. Blessing

But check this out: the seven representing the complete Savior is the sum of the number 3 for Christ's deity and the number 4 for Christ's humanity. Three stands for God who is the Holy Trinity. Four stands for man who was made from the earth and the four-corners of the earth remind us of the origin of man. Seven is ascribed to Jesus because He is true God and true man, the complete Savior!

At Revelation 4:11, the heavenly elders say to God: ***“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”***

Glory, honor, and power are ascribed to God the Father...and these are included in the 7-fold ascription of praise to Jesus...worthy is the Lamb to have glory, honor, and power ***because He is also God!***

But for Jesus there is more (even while 1st Chronicles 29:11-12 ascribes all of these including more to the Godhead), but here in Revelation the Lamb ALSO receives: wealth, wisdom, strength, and blessing.

Be completely honest and don't hold back: which of us here today would love to have wealth (as in all spiritual wealth that Christ has won through His blood), wisdom, strength, and blessing? Some people spend their whole lives chasing after these things and never discovering the only true source of these riches! The fact is that Jesus who was slain for you is the wisdom of God and the wealth of God; He is your strength who gives you complete forgiveness today; and He is your blessing, because in Him God has given you the Kingdom of God today...not in some future millennium, but *today*. The complete Savior has made you completely forgiven and completely filled with His life! “Worthy is the Lamb!”