

Revelation 5
Who is Worthy?

If you had a nickel for every time you've heard the expression, "Jesus is the reason for the season" some of you would be pretty rich.

It really is true, but there are various facets to the truth of that saying.

He is the reason because He is the one whose birth we celebrate.

He is the reason because He is worthy of worship and honor.

He is the reason because He is more important than packages, parades, and parties.

Revelation chapter FIVE gives us another insight into why He is the reason for the season. This passage may seem odd for ADVENT but it does give us a good insight for Advent, and the insight comes in the form of a question. Listen for it as I read ...

The Book with Seven Seals

1 I **saw** in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. 2 And I **saw** a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?" 3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. 4 Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; 5 and one of the elders *said to me, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals."

6 And I **saw** between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. 7 And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. 8 When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they *sang a new song, saying,

"Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice,

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."

13 And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever."

14 And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped.

There are three things that JOHN SAW in this chapter:

He saw a book that was sealed.

He saw a strong angel proclaiming, "Who is worthy to open the book and break the seals?"

He saw a Lamb standing, as if slain.

Did you hear the question that is the key to the "reason for the season"?

"Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?"

Jesus is the reason for the season because NO ONE WAS worthy to open the book and break its seals. v. 4 This question brought John to tears. He was weeping over the desperate condition being lamented

...no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it

(RAYBURN) The book that John **SAW** in v.1 IS important because it is the record of God's plan for the world – a plan that includes both judgement of the wicked and the salvation of God's people. The contents of the scroll will carry us backwards and forward in history. According to John's vision, as long as the seals are unbroken no one can know the ultimate plan of God. The opening of the scroll sets the divine will in motion to accomplish God's purpose and to bring history to its predestined conclusion.

Does it seem a bit odd that John did not remember the truth of Jesus as being worthy? Did he not remember the miracles, the teaching, the death, resurrection, ascension of Christ, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

For whatever reason, John hadn't connected the dots about Jesus being worthy and he weeps greatly. If John could forget and not connect the dots, what about us?

In what ways do we forget that Christ IS WORTHY and that He alone is worthy? One reason we worship together is to get such a corporate reminder. One reason we observe ADVENT is to reset our corporate spiritual calendar with the reminder of the mystery of the Incarnation. It is worth remembering.

John is weeping because SAW THE proclamation that no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll. Friends, that is THE REASON FOR THE SEASON – Someone had to come who was WORTHY.

Beale: The question is, "Who in the created order has sovereign authority over God's plan of judgement and redemption? "

God Himself is worthy, but He has required that it be opened by someone else, and no one was worthy. Adam created the mess and one from Adam's race had to be worthy to make things right? But there was NO One qualified, so John weeps greatly.

If no one is worthy, ...
then all is lost.

...There will be no redemption.

...There will be no New Heaven and New Earth.

...NO tears be wiped away.

...NOTHING WILL BE MADE NEW.

...The curse from the Garden will never be lifted.

Vern Poythress: (The Returning the King p. 166) The destiny of John, of the church, of the universe itself hangs in the balance over the question of whether someone can open the scroll.

John weeps because no one is worthy. That should make us all weep. That should also be our honest EVALUATION of our condition, yet it takes a while for us to come to that conclusion.

We all seek to gain the status of 'worthy' in some way. That is what life is about from the age of 2 or 3 to full adulthood. If we don't admit our unworthiness and run to Jesus, we spend our lives trying to prove we are worthy.

EX: A CLASSIC EXAMPLE Harold Abrams – Chariots of Fire-

<http://michaelkelley.co/2010/08/10-seconds-to-justify-my-existence/>

In the movie Chariots of Fire, Olympic athlete Harold Abrahams says the following when reflecting on his upcoming race:

"And now in one hour's time, I will be out there again. I will raise my eyes and look down that corridor; 4 feet wide, with 10 lonely seconds to justify my existence. But will I?"

Michael Kelley offers this reflection...

Ten seconds to justify my existence.
Ten seconds to prove my worth.
Ten seconds to know that I'm valuable.
How very, very sad. And yet how very, very familiar. I might say it like this:

One hour to prove I'm a good worker.
One clever blog post to remind people to keep reading.
One insightful tweet to make people think I'm smart.

In the end, though, it's just a race. It's just 150 characters. It's just another project at work.
And we are left wondering, "Who am I? Am I really worth anything?"

We don't need 10 seconds to justify our existence; we have something better. Jesus did it for us not in 10 seconds, but in 6 hours on a Friday afternoon.
Those six hours free us from the burden of self-justification. With His arms outstretched, Jesus told us what our purpose is. He is the key to why we are here and who we are.
We live in freedom – freedom to work. To run. To write. To live. Because Jesus has redeemed us.

If you don't know Christ, what are you doing to justify your existence? You're doing something, whether you admit it or not. What are you trusting in for your worth? If it isn't Christ, then you are on sinking sand.

Christian friend, even as believers we fall back into the pattern of trying to make ourselves worthy. That is the default mode of what the Bible calls "the flesh." It's the part of us that wants a righteousness of its own. It says, "I don't need Christ as a savior, he can just be my example to follow."

But the verdict of heaven is that "no one is worthy" and that moved John to weep greatly.

Fortunately, John 'SAW' something else- a lamb standing, as if slain.

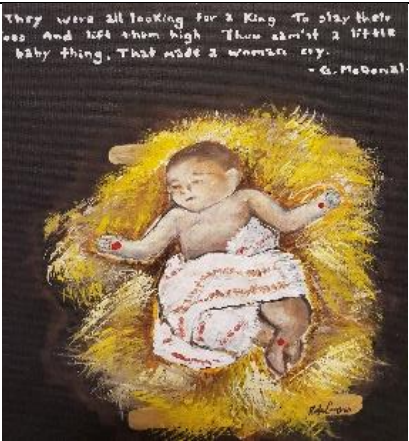
But before Jesus could redeem us, he had to become one of us – Emmanuel – "God with Us".
He had to be born and live a life that fulfilled all righteousness. He had to obey as the second Adam.
AND HE DID.

The eternal son became flesh and dwelt among us. He lived the life we should have lived, and he died the death we should have died.

BECAUSE OF THAT John now hears the good news from one of the 24 elders...v.5, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals."

When we hear what John hears, we might expect to see a mighty kingly warrior or a large fierce Lion.
Instead, we see a lamb standing, as if slain.

How did this happen?
The baby in the manger was born to become the Lamb that was slain.



“They were all looking for a king to slay their foes and lift them high. Thou cam’st a little baby thing, that made a woman cry.” George McDonald

v. 6 John SAW...a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. 7 And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. 8 When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they *sang a new song, saying,
 “Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.
 10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”

It was the Lamb who was victorious in a most unexpected way – He Was Slain.....and He rose again.

How is that possible?

Friends, this is why the Incarnation is so significant. If God can become man; if Christ is God in the flesh, then He can defeat death and rise from the dead.

J.I. Packer rightly notes that while people may find the gospel narratives and teachings hard to believe, they do so by finding difficulties in the wrong places.

The real difficulties are not in the atonement or the resurrection or the virgin birth or the miracles of Jesus.

Packer, Knowing God...

But in fact, the real difficulty, the supreme mystery with which the gospel confronts us, does not lie here at all: It lies not in the Good Friday message of atonement, nor in the Easter message of resurrection, but in the Christmas message of Incarnation. **The really staggering Christian claim is that Jesus of Nazareth was God made man—that the second person of the Godhead became the “second man” (1 Cor 15:47), determining human destiny, the second representative head of the race, and that he took humanity without the loss of deity, so that Jesus of Nazareth was as truly and fully divine as he was human.**

John Donne Holy Sonnet XV

<https://owlcation.com/humanities/John-Donnes-Holy-Sonnet-XV>

The Son of glory came down, and was slain,
 Us whom He had made, and Satan stole, to unbind.
 'Twas much, that man was made like God before,
 But, that God should be made like man, much more.

And He who conquered sin and death now sits on the Throne, and He invites us TO COME TO THE TABLE.

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