

Look! Listen! - And Overcome!

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

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Look! Listen! – And Overcome!

"The Book of the King"

Lord's Day Morning

February 10, 2008

Pastor Jeff Crippen

Sermon Text: Revelation 4-5

"The kingdom of God has come into the world and the powers of the age to come are operative even in the age that now is." Peter Lewis

"The key to the history of the world is the kingdom of God." Lloyd-Jones

"The throne of God outlives the dissolution of the world." Stephen Charnock

"The only kingdom that will prevail in this world is the kingdom that is not of this world." Anon.

"Christ is lovely, Christ is very lovely, Christ is most lovely, Christ is always lovely, Christ is altogether lovely."
Thomas Brooks

"Jesus Christ is the one to whom the whole alphabet of history points."
Leslie Newbigin

"Jesus Christ is the centre of everything and the object of everything, and he who does not know him knows nothing of the order of nature and nothing of himself." Blaise Pascal

"Christ has outlasted the empire that crucified him nineteen centuries ago. He will outlast the dictators who defy him now." Ralph W. Sockman

Introduction

There cannot be a kingdom without a King. You might have a people, a land, even some kind of law – but it would be disorganized chaos without a king. You cannot have a *king-dom* without a king. The very word speaks of *dominion* – the dominion of a king.

We have, to this point in The Revelation, met the risen Lord in His majesty and glory (chapter 1). And we have met Him as Lord of the churches

(chapters 2-3). Now however, as we have come to the 4th and 5th chapters, we meet Him in what we might say is His chief role – Christ as the King. Here the King receives kingly authority from the Father and the rest of The Revelation is a visionary account of Christ bringing His kingdom in over and against all kingdoms set in opposition - until,

NKJ Revelation 11:15 Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

NKJ Revelation 12:10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.

NKJ Revelation 17:14 "These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those *who are* with Him *are* called, chosen, and faithful."

NKJ Revelation 19:16 And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name

written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Christ's kingdom, you see, opposed by and warring against the kingdom of Satan, of the beast, of the kingdoms and kings of the earth who give their allegiance to the beast –

NKJ Revelation 13:1 Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. 2 Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like *the feet of* a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. 3 And *I saw* one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. 4 So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who *is* like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" 5 And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.

But the King – the Lamb – still brings in His kingdom and their doom is certain -

NKJ Revelation 16:10 Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain.

NKJ Revelation 17:12 "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. 13 "These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. 14 "These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those *who are* with Him *are* called, chosen, and faithful."

These are not things which have not yet begun – as the futurist school of interpreting The Revelation would hold. This battle between the Kingdom of God in Christ the King and the kingdom of the devil has been ongoing down through human history, and it came into a new epoch when Christ came into this world and conquered sin and death on the cross. In other words, The Revelation *is a visionary account of the great themes of our redemption being worked out in Christ and in Christ's Kingdom right down through this church age until Christ comes once again.* It is, as we saw last time, an account of The Final

Exodus. The events here in this 5th chapter *have already occurred*. The King has already taken the seven-sealed scroll from the Father.

The Revelation, in other words, is a biblical and divine (and therefore accurate and truthful) account of the *meaning and aim of all history*. If anyone desires to make sense out of the rise and fall of the great civilizations, of the great wars, of famines and earthquakes, of plagues and persecutions – then this is the book for you. The Revelation gives us a pictorial account of these great themes being worked out until the kingdom of the devil and this fallen creation are no more.

Alright then, let's focus our attention upon this great event seen in chapter 5 – the Lion/Lamb taking the book from the Father, accompanied by the praise and worship of all heaven.

I. The Book of the King

NKJ Revelation 5:1 And I saw in the right *hand* of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. 2 Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" 3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the

scroll, or to look at it. 4 So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. 5 But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." 6 And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7 Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

If this strikes you as it did me, then the first question that has come into your mind at this point is –

“Just what is this book?”

It is written “inside and on the back” (it is a scroll, not a bound volume such as we have today), and it is sealed up with 7 seals – as an ancient official document would be sealed with wax seals bearing the imprint of the king or some royal personality. Not just anyone was authorized to open such a sealed scroll. That is the very reason for the seals!

What is this book then? Let’s consider the information we are given –

- The Father holds it in his right hand
- Apparently, the Father has sealed the scroll with His seals
- To open the scroll requires “worthiness.”
- Christ the Lamb alone is worthy, and His worthiness rests in the fact that He has *overcome*.
- His overcoming was effected by His being slain and thereby, in His blood, purchasing the people of God, making them into a kingdom and priests
- The Lamb is worthy then of power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing, and *dominion*. Eternal dominion.

The data then points to Christ as *the victorious King whose victory was effected in His being slain and now He has been given a kingdom, a people, dominion which is eternal dominion*. The Final Exodus has begun, you see.

This seven-sealed scroll then has something to do with the fact that Christ is King, and only this King is worthy to take the scroll and to open it *so as to effect the decrees which are contained in it*. And if we jump ahead for a moment, we are given information about what takes place when these seals are broken by the King. For example –

NKJ Revelation 6:1 Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see." 2 And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer. 3 When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see." 4 Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that *people* should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword. 5 When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. 6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine." 7 When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see." 8 So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.

This is the language of conquest. It is the decree of God whereby His own King goes forth to effect the final defeat and destruction of everything and everyone set in opposition to Him.

NKJ Revelation 6:12 I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. 13 And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. 14 Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. 15 And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, 16 and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

This scroll then is the eternal decree of the Father which is His gracious and glorious decree that His people and His creation *will be redeemed and set free from sin and the curse and death*. But it had to remain sealed – not even the Lord Himself could have opened it and carried us on to final glorification,

unless a worthy King had first conquered –

NKJ Colossians 2:13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

This is why the Lamb, and only the Lamb, has become the Lion. This is why only He is worthy to take the scroll and carry its decrees right on down to their culmination, then give the fully redeemed creation back to the Father.

That this is indeed the correct identification of this book – which we have called *The Book of the King*, is confirmed way on back in the 7th chapter of Daniel where Daniel, peering centuries ahead and seeing the very same thing John is seeing here, says –

NKJ Daniel 7:1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head

while on his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, telling the main facts. 2 Daniel spoke, saying, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. 3 "And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. 4 "The first *was* like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it. 5 "And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and *had* three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: 'Arise, devour much flesh!' 6 "After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it. 7 "After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It *was* different from all the beasts that *were* before it, and it had ten horns. 8 "I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, *were* eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words. 9 " I watched till

thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment *was* white as snow, And the hair of His head *was* like pure wool. His throne *was* a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire; 10 A fiery stream issued And came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, And the books were opened. 11 "I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking; I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame. 12 "As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. 13 "I was watching in the night visions, And behold, *One* like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. 14 Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom *the one* Which shall not be destroyed. 15 " I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit within *my* body, and the visions of my head troubled me.

It is the same thing you see. The Son of Man comes before the Ancient of Days and is given *dominion and glory*

and a kingdom – an everlasting kingdom which shall never be destroyed. And this is what I conclude then that we have here in Revelation 5 when the Lamb comes before His Father's throne and receives this scroll. It is the book of the King, it is the Father's decree that the One with all authority can now carry out by destroying the evil one and all remnants of his rebellious kingdom and subjects. Daniel saw it from afar. John saw it *effected and begun* and we live in the era of the Lion/Lamb's destruction of the dark realms.

It may even well be that the rest of The Revelation IS this book of the King. That is to say, that this 7-sealed scroll contains the divine decree and authorization to carry out the very things we see in the rest of this book. What is in the scroll? Read the rest of The Revelation, in other words.

There has been renewed interest in the past number of years in what is called *biblical theology*. While systematic theology considers the doctrines of the Scriptures topically, biblical theology works to follow the history of redemption and all the themes associated with it from Genesis to Revelation. In biblical theology for example, you might follow the theme of God's Temple through the Scriptures – this theme of God

dwelling with and among His people – and relate it all, of course, to Christ.

A professor of Old Testament in Sydney, Australia named Graeme Goldsworthy has written a number of books on biblical theology with titles such as According to Plan, The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible, and The Gospel in Revelation. These books are very readable and helpful in showing us just what is the “big picture” of the Bible and how the parts relate to the whole. Listen to Goldsworthy comment then on “The Lamb and the Lion” here in Revelation 5 –

“The publication of a scroll would mean that the time had come and the secrets were out! John recalls this characteristic in Revelation 5. The scroll contains the message of God, the truth about his kingdom. But who is able to reveal it? John weeps because none is found who is worthy to reveal the truth about God and his kingdom and, so it seems, it must remain sealed in the scroll. But then he is given good news. There is one who has triumphed and is therefore able to open the scroll. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Messiah from the royal line of David.

In that brief description, John captures the sense of fierce majesty and irresistible strength. Here is

represented the warrior-king fresh from battle with the blood of the foe upon his sword. He is invincible and glorious in all his conquests. He has filled with terror all who would resist him, and has put them to flight. Because of this power and might which has brought him triumph, the Lion is able to open to all men the mysteries of the kingdom of God.” [The Gospel in Revelation]

I would add to this that not only is Christ worthy to open the scroll and to thereby reveal its contents to us, but by opening it He is actually effecting its decrees. Listen to Dennis Johnson on this point –

“If the scroll stays sealed, the consequences are even more serious than the confusion of the churches. The opening of the scroll would be not only an act of revelatory disclosure, but also an act of executive authority, carrying its edicts into action. The things written in the scroll ‘must take place’ because they constitute God’s plan for history, culminating in the vindication of his servants and the unchallenged establishment of his dominion on earth, as it is in heaven. The strong angel’s question is not merely Who is worthy to reveal God’s plan? but also Who is worthy to carry out God’s plan? Who deserves to receive from the Father’s hand all authority in heaven and earth, to make

the kingdoms of this world into the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ?" [The Triumph of the Lamb]

Do you begin to get hold of the significance and importance of this for Christ's church in this world? For you and for me? To understand that the King has taken His Book from the Father and is right now advancing His kingdom against the enemy's kingdom, and the victory has been won, the outcome guaranteed?

I was reading this last week the Update for Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in South Carolina and came across an article by a pastor who was a 2005 graduate of the seminary. In recounting what things he learned there have particularly helped him in his ministry, he wrote this –

"To realize that Christ's people have been made participants in the new creation of which His resurrection is the firstfruits, and that this new creation is irreversibly and irrepressibly advancing regardless of what we read in the newspaper – this can fix our hope, steady our purpose, and make us love what is worthy to be loved amid a world of paper treasures." [Pastor Ben Miller, OPC, Franklin Square, NY].

The King is Away

There is still another portion of Scripture which sheds light upon Revelation 5 – the Lion/Lamb and the book of the King. It is found in the 19th chapter of Luke's Gospel –

NKJ Luke 19:11 Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem **and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately.**

12 Therefore He said: "**A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.**

13 "So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.' 14 "But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this *man* to reign over us.'

15 "And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. 16 "Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.' 17 "And he said to him, 'Well *done*, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.' 18 "And the second came, saying, 'Master, your

mina has earned five minas.' 19 "Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.' 20 "Then another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. 21 'For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.' 22 "And he said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, *you* wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. 23 'Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?' 24 "And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give *it* to him who has ten minas.' 25 ("But they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas.') 26 'For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.

27 'But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay *them* before me.'
"

See it? It is the same thing we have in Daniel 7 and in Revelation 5. Christ going before the Father and receiving the Book of the King. He then begins to carry out the decrees of that book until ultimately He will return from

that far country and render reward and judgment. All enemies *who did not want Christ to reign over them*, will be condemned.

History – past, today, and future – all of history is about the kingdom of Christ being brought in. It is about this fundamental question –

“Will you have Christ as your King to reign over you?”

This really is the question which the gospel puts to the sinner. Will you have Christ as your King? So that when we tell the gospel to people, we are telling them that *there is a King. He has been here once before. His kingdom has begun and it is expanding until it fills the whole earth. All who persist in rebellion against Him will one day be swept away just as those were who refused to get on the ark. Will you submit to the King now and receive the blessings of His kingdom, or will you perish in hell on that Day when He comes?*

In the meantime, all creation – both heaven and earth, await the coming of the King and the fullness of His kingdom –

NKJ Revelation 5:11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them

was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

13 And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power *Be* to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!" 14 Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

This is the very thing Paul wrote about in terms of *groaning* back in Romans 8

NKJ Romans 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope; 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For

we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. 23 Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

Conclusion

What if there were no Savior/King? No Lion/Lamb? This is the thought which must have moved the Apostle John to intense weeping while he still thought there was no one able to open the Book of the King. No matter how mighty and glorious the highest archangels and cherubim and seraphim might be, not even they could have destroyed the reign of darkness. The curse would have been permanent. Satan would still accuse. Men would still end in hell. The chaos and suffering in this world would have no point. There would be no dawning of a day when death is no more. This is why the weeping, you see.

And it is also why heaven erupted in choruses of praise when the Lamb came and took the scroll. That dark, hopeless scenario is not to be – it is not even a possibility. Christ has conquered. Christ has paid it all. Christ is King – the rest of this book of Revelation is being carried out, and nothing – nothing – can stop it.

It has been written. So shall it be.
World without end. Amen. Amen.

This is at the root of, you see, the fact that –

NKJ Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.

It is the reason why –

NKJ Romans 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? 33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? *It is* God who justifies. 34 Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." 37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

All because there is a King and a kingdom that will never end. The King has taken the Book of the King.