

Beholding the Lamb of God

Revelation 5:6

The Book of Revelation can be a hard book to study and understand because of symbolism and unusual language found there. For example, in Revelation 20 we read of reigning with Christ a thousand years, "... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years...but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." These verses have led to much discussion and speculation in the church as to what these verses mean.

Is the thousand year reign referring to a literal or figurative thousand years? Is there such a thing as a thousand year earthly reign of Jesus? Is the kingdom of Christ limited to a thousand years?

These are just some of the questions Christians have asked and debated in church history, and continue to do so today. But I am not here today to preach from Revelation 20 and the thousand year reign of Christ.

In addition to chapter 20, there are many passages in Revelation that are full of spectacular imagery.

Revelation 21 describes the new heavens and the new earth, and the cosmic wonders that will take place in the future, “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

In Revelation 6, powerful symbolism is used to describe the work of the gospel of Jesus Christ as it goes forth to conquer in the world, “And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.”

In Revelation 5 Jesus Christ is called *The Lion of the Tribe of Judah*, and *The Root of David*.

My text, however, is found in Revelation 5:6, “And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, **stood a Lamb as it had been slain**, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.”

We know from Scripture that Jesus Christ is identified as the Lamb of God. John the Baptist saw the Lord Jesus on the banks of the Jordan, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

There are twenty-eight references to Christ as the Lamb in the book of Revelation (more than any other book in the Bible).

The Book of Revelation was written at a time when the church was experiencing intense persecutions from the Roman Empire. The Roman Emperor Domitian was on the throne. He was the first of the emperors to deify himself during his lifetime by assuming the title of *Lord and God*, and his ruthless hunting and killing of Christians is well documented by historians.

The Book of Revelation, therefore, was written in the midst of the storms of persecution, when many Christians had already perished and more were to follow them.

What would encourage, and inspire the beleaguered church in their time of persecutions, as death stared them in the face?

Writing in exile on the island of Patmos, the Apostle John reminds the suffering saints that the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, is not dead but alive. Christ rules over life and He rules in death. Christ was victorious in life by keeping the Law of God perfectly, and Christ was victorious over death by dying on the Cross, and rising from the grave on the third day.

Therefore, Christians can say, “O, death, where is thy sting? O, grave where is thy victory?”

The fear of death is real to many people today, isn't it? Do you fear death? Is that a subject you don't want to think about or talk about? Are you ready to die and meet God?

Many people fear death because they are not ready to die. The Bible teaches you can be ready to die by trusting in Jesus Christ to save you from your sins, and by receiving His perfect righteousness, without which no man can enter into heaven.

The fact is death exists because of sin. The Scripture teaches, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Christ died on the Cross as the Lamb of God so that sinners like you and me can be delivered from sin. Christ offers full and free salvation to sinners!

Therefore, the sight of the Lamb of God would have been a great source of strength and encouragement to the early Christians facing great persecutions.

The design of the whole chapter in Revelation 5 is evidently to honor the Lamb of God, by showing that the power was entrusted to him which was confided to no one else in heaven or earth, of disclosing what is to come.

Albert Barnes writes in his commentary, “Nothing else would better illustrate this than the fact that he alone could break the mysterious seals which barred out the knowledge of the future from all created eyes; and nothing would be better adapted to impress this on the mind than the representation in this chapter--the exhibition of a mysterious book in the hand of God; the proclamation of the angel, calling on any who could do it to open the book; the fact that no one in heaven or earth could do it; the tears shed by John

when it was found that no one could do it; the assurance of one of the elders that the Lion of the tribe of Judah had power to do it; and the profound adoration of all in heaven and in earth and under the earth, in view of the power entrusted to him of breaking these mysterious seals.”

The title of my message today is simply, “Beholding the Lamb of God.” When we behold the Lamb of God, we see three things.

1. When we behold the Lamb of God we see His sacrifice.

We read in verse six, “And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, **stood a Lamb as it had been slain.**”

John Wesley, the great Methodist preacher, observes the posture of the Lamb, “Jesus Christ lieth no more; he no more falls on his face; the days of his weakness and mourning are ended. He is now in a posture of readiness to execute all his offices of prophet, priest, and king.”

Christ is identified here as a Lamb as it had been slain. That is, in some way having the appearance of having been slain; having some marks or indications about it, that it had been slain.

What those were, the writer does not specify. If it were covered with blood, or there were marks of mortal wounds, it would be all that the representation demands.

The great work which the Redeemer performed--that of making an atonement for sin on the Cross--was thus represented to John in such a way that he at once recognized him, and saw the reason why the office of breaking the seals was entrusted to him.

It should be remarked that this representation of Christ is merely symbolic, and we are not to suppose that the Redeemer really assumed this form, or that he appears in this form in heaven. We should no more suppose that the Redeemer appears literally as a lamb in heaven with numerous eyes and horns, than that there is a literal throne and a sea of glass there. Christ is pictured as one with marks on his person which brought to remembrance the fact that he had been slain for the sins of His people.

Albert Barnes writes, “When we use the term "Lamb of God" now, as is often done in preaching and in prayer, it never suggests to the mind the idea of a lamb. We think of the Redeemer as resembling a lamb in his moral attributes and in his sacrifice, but never as to form. This supposition relieves the passage of all that is incongruous and unpleasant, and may be all that John meant.”

Adam Clarke writes, “This is very remarkable; so important is the sacrificial offering of Christ in the sight of God that he is still represented as being in the very act of pouring out his blood for the offences of man. This gives great advantage to faith: when any soul comes to the throne of grace, he finds a sacrifice there provided for him to offer to God. Thus all succeeding generations find they have the continual sacrifice ready, and the newly-shed blood to offer.”

If you are here today without a covering for your sins, then the sacrifice of the Lamb of God is ready for you to offer to God. The blood of Christ is able to save you from all your sins. Go to Christ with your sins and He will forgive you.

We read in Isaiah 1:18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Before Jesus was crucified He said of His life, "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

Christ chose to lay down His life as a sacrifice for sinners. In giving His life as a sacrifice, Christ fulfilled the words which Abraham spoke to his son all those years before, "God himself will provide a lamb for sacrifice."

This is the Lamb which takes away the sins of the world. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross still has the power to save men from sins today because He is not dead, but alive.

There are only two kinds of sacrifices you can bring before God: The sacrifice of your hands. Cain brought his works before God, and it was rejected. Or the sacrifice of Christ. Able brought Christ's sacrifice and it was accepted. Jesus Christ is the only acceptable sacrifice for sin and uncleanness before God.

Hebrews 9:13-14 declares, "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

The first thing we behold is the Lamb of God in His sacrifice.

2. When we behold the Lamb of God we see His power.

We read in verse 6, "...a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns."

The number seven here seems to be designed, as in other places, to denote completeness. The meaning is, that he had so large a number as to denote complete dominion.

The seven horns are emblems of authority and power--for the horn is a symbol of power and dominion in the Scripture. The strength of an animal is in the horn, and that it is by this that he obtains a victory over other animals.

We read in Deuteronomy 33:17, "His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh."

Jeremiah 48:25, "The horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is broken, saith the LORD."

The seven horns denote the all-prevailing and infinite might of Jesus Christ. He can support all his friends; he can destroy all his enemies; and he can save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him.

No man has the power to save. No church has the power to save. No religion has the power to save. The power of salvation rests only in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

As the Lamb of God Christ alone has the authority and power to open the book of the seven seals. No one else has this authority or power.

John confirms this truth, “And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.” That is until the Lamb of God came and opened the Book.

Do you see how sin has made all of us unworthy before God? Sin makes us dead to God. Therefore, we can't open the book because we are sinners. But Christ can open the book. He is worthy. Christ lived the perfect life. He died the atoning death. Therefore, Christ gives life to dead sinners. He makes sinners into new creatures. Are you dead to Christ today? You may know about Christ. But do you know Him as your personal savior. Call upon Christ, and He will save you from sin and give you a new beginning, and a new life in Him.

Revelation 5:11-12 records the doxology sung when Christ opened the sealed book, “And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”

Who is worthy to open the seals? The Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. And this proclamation was made to stir up an earnest desire in John, and all the saints he represents, to know what was in this book; and to illustrate, and set off with a greater splendor, the glory, excellence, ability, and worth of Jesus Christ.

Have you experienced the power of Christ in your life? Are you forgiven of your sins? The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.

The second thing we behold is the Lamb of God in His power.

3. When we behold the Lamb of God we see His wisdom.

It follows in verse 6, "...and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God." This represents the Holy Spirit of God in its manifold graces given by Christ unto the church, as his agent and advocate upon earth.

The effectual working of the Spirit of God goes through the whole creation; in the natural, as well as spiritual worlds. What holds the universe together? For could mere matter act or move without the Spirit? Could it gravitate or attract without the Spirit? Who gives life to sinners in Christ? Can sinners be saved without the working of the Holy Spirit? What unites the church except the Holy Spirit of God?

The Holy Spirit is identified as the seven spirits here in Revelation 5:6. We see here the close relationship between the Spirit of God and the Lamb of God.

The primary purpose of the Holy Spirit is to testify about Jesus Christ.

Albert Barnes writes, “The operations of the Holy Spirit are to be regarded as connected with the work of the Redeemer. Thus, all the operations of the Spirit are connected with, and are a part of, the work of redemption.”

The Holy Spirit first works in us a sense of our ignorance, vanity, poverty, and depravity, before He brings us to perceive and acknowledge that in Christ alone are to be found true wisdom, real blessedness, perfect goodness, and unspotted righteousness.

A commentary observes, “The seven eyes of the Lamb represent the same sevenfold Spirit profluent from the incarnate Redeemer in His world-wide energy. The Greek for "sent forth," is akin to the term "apostle," reminding us of the Spirit-impelled labors of Christ's apostles and ministers throughout the world: if the present tense be read, as seems best, the idea will be that of those labors continually going on unto the end. "Eyes" symbolize Christ's all-watchful and wise providence for His Church, and against her foes.”

Maybe you are here today and facing a situation or decision in your life and you don't know what to do or where to turn? You don't have the answers. Then go to the Lamb of God and ask Him for wisdom. The Lamb of God is the true Wisdom of God.

We read in I Corinthians 1:30, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us **wisdom**, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Has the Holy Spirit opened your spiritual eyes to behold the Lamb of God? Has He opened your heart like He opened the heart of Lydia in the book of Acts?

The third thing we behold is the Lamb of God in His wisdom.

In closing, the Apostle John beheld the Lamb of God in Revelation 5. He beheld the Lamb of God in His sacrifice. He beheld the Lamb of God in His power. He beheld the Lamb of God in His wisdom. Let **us today** behold the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. May the Lord bless His Word to our hearts. Let us pray.