

How Much Longer Can We Take This?

October 23, 2022

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Revelation 5

Session Outline

1. Unworthy and Overcome (Revelation 5:1-4)
2. Only One Is Worthy (Revelation 5:5-7)
3. Praise Jesus (Revelation 5:8-14)

Theological Theme

We live in a broken world full of problems that need to be dealt with. There is no solution apart from Jesus because He is the only One worthy. No one on earth, in heaven, or under the earth can fix what is wrong except the perfect Lamb of God.



Leader Guide

How Much Longer Can We Take This?

Introduction

What do you do when something is broken? Who is the best “fix it” person you know? We all need someone who can take care of problems when they arise, whether it is a leaking pipe, a broken toy, or a broken relationship. You may go to different people according to what needs fixing, but typically we want things to be made right and restored to working order as soon as possible.

Think about what happens when you ignore something broken. If it is on your car, you may find yourself stuck on the side of the road. If it is a toy, your kids may drive you crazy until they are able to play with it again. If it is a broken relationship, without attention to healing, things may grow worse quickly. We all want and need what is broken to be fixed. The broken world we live in needs fixing, and nothing we try apart from Jesus is going to make a difference as we will see in Revelation 5.

- ❓ Who do you turn to when something is broken (vehicle, appliance, relationship, toy, etc.)?
- ❓ Why does it matter if you find a solution to the problem?

Session Summary

Because we live in a fallen world, God has plans to bring judgment. He also has a plan to save us from our sins if we trust in Him. God originally sent Jesus to earth to offer salvation to any who accept Him, and that choice is continually before every person. God will send Jesus again (the second coming), when He will bring judgment and the new heaven and earth will be established.

The apostle John was given a revelation of what would occur at the end of time. When John saw the judgment and how far the world had fallen from God, his heart was broken. He wept for what would happen and recorded what the Lord showed him so that we can know where to find the solution for the problems we face.

Nothing or no one on earth, in heaven, or under the earth is worthy and capable of fixing the problem we face except Jesus. He alone is the answer. To look for viable options elsewhere is futile. Jesus is not a solution; He is the solution. He is essential to life.

1. Unworthy and Overcome (Revelation 5:1-4)

John described many symbolic elements in his vision. Prior to this chapter, he had been writing about the throne room of heaven. Chapter 5 starts with a picture of a scroll in the right hand of God. This is the hand of power and authority. Scrolls were used to record important words, usually with writing only on one side. That this scroll is described with writing on both the front and back indicates that it was unusual, very detailed, and held much information.

Seals were used to finalize and legitimize a document. In a court the witnesses tied strings and sealed them with wax to protect the information from being corrupted or changed. All seven seals must be opened for the scroll to be read. This scroll was from God, and only Jesus can open it. The key was not the writing on the scroll but the seven seals and the One worth of opening them.

 What does it tell you about Jesus that He is the only one capable of opening this scroll of God?

What was written on the scroll is important to the destiny of the world. John described an angel who called out for someone to open the seals and read the scroll. John was emphatic that no one was found worthy to do so. It is not up to man to decide the future; only God has that right and power. If an angel was looking throughout the earth and could find no one worthy, it was because there was no one worthy.

This broke John's heart. John's experience reminds us of the futility of man's efforts to solve our problems on our own. Though we may work and sweat and strain to fix the problem of sin, without One who is worthy, we have nothing. John had dedicated his life to spreading the gospel and doing kingdom work. When he was faced with the complete brokenness of the world and hopelessness apart from the lamb of God, he wept.

 What are some things people do to try to fix the sin problem in the world? Why is that futile apart from Jesus?

One Standing in the Midst of the Throne

Chapter 5 depicts the delegation of the divine authority to the risen Lord by introducing a sequence of events again reminiscent of Daniel 7. In Daniel 7 the people of God were oppressed by four terrible beasts, symbolic of evil empires and kings. Similarly, Revelation is written to people who either were, or soon would be, experiencing persecution from powers of evil. In Daniel 7 the heavenly thrones of judgment are established, the books of judgment are opened, and authority to carry out God's judgment, and thus to rescue the people of God from the evil nations, is committed to a human figure. This human figure, a glorious "son of man," mysteriously appears before the throne of God in the clouds of heaven.

In mourning over the state of the world, John said he began to weep loudly (v. 4 ESV). It was customary for mourners to be loud as a sign of the depth of their grief. John felt deep grief over what he recognized as a hopeless situation. When has your heart been broken over the sin and coming judgment of someone else? What would it take for you to weep and be mournful because of the consequences someone else has coming due to their poor choices? That kind of emotion implies vested interest. It reveals a person who cares about others and their suffering so much that it physically and emotionally affects them. That is a person who has a heart like God.

 Application: How does your heart break for the things that break God's heart? How is God calling you to act in response?

2. Only One Is Worthy (Revelation 5:5-7)

One of the elders interrupted John's grieving to tell him One had been found who was able to open the scroll. Imagine how John felt as he realized hope had returned to what seemed like a hopeless situation.

 How did the elder describe the One worthy to open the scroll?

The elder using the title "Lion from the tribe of Judah" indicated the powerful nature of this One. This One overcame death, sin, and the grave. He also endured the wrath of the Father that we deserved for sin. The title given to Jesus is a fitting description of our Savior and leaves no doubt about His worthiness.

The elder also called him the Root of David. This refers to Jesus being the prophesied Messiah who was chosen to save the world. Roots imply history, time, permanence, and depth. It is the root that gives life and sustenance as well as keeps one grounded. Trees are strengthened by their roots. Jesus was the One from the beginning of time. He was imbedded deep in the Father's plans. He has the strength to withstand anything, and as John heard in his vision, He conquered so that He could open the scroll and its seals.

 Which description for Jesus used here means the most to you and why?

Reading how the elder described the One found worthy, you might imagine that John looked up expecting to see something resembling Aslan. Yet, he wrote that he looked up and saw "a slaughtered lamb," not a mighty roaring, powerful lion. The way John described this lamb was both present and past. He said that the lamb was standing. He also

said the lamb appeared as though he had been slain. This referenced Jesus's work on the cross. This Lamb who had been found worthy to open the scroll was the Lamb who had already accomplished the work of forgiveness, an innocent sacrifice to pay the punishment for our sins. His willing substitution is always relevant and current. It will never grow old or be insufficient.

The seven horns and seven eyes may represent the all-powerful (omnipotence) and all-knowing (omniscience) nature of God. Horns historically and biblically represent power while eyes carry the context of knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge, wisdom, and power were all wrapped up in the love, gentleness, and humility of a little lamb. He is a worthy One that came a took the scroll as only He could. No man past or present has the power to dictate the destiny of creation. Jesus alone is worthy.

 Application: How does this description of Jesus impact you today? Where do you need Jesus's wisdom and/or power?

3. Praise Jesus! (Revelation 5:8-14)

When Jesus, the Lamb of the tribe of Judah, stepped forward and took the scroll as only He could, there was only one possible response. All fell in worship. Those at the throne, from high-ranking angels to redeemed people, hit their knees.

The elders had bowls of incense which represented the prayers of the saints. Consider that our prayers mean so much to God that He included them in this sacred scene. God cherishes the prayers of His people. They are valuable like golden bowls and sweet to Him like the scent of incense. If our prayers matter this much to God, they should be a priority to us. Then the elders sang a new song. They worshiped in every way they could. It is good to respond to Jesus in worship, and sometimes He may give us a new song or fresh affection for Him to accurately share what is in our hearts at the time.

 When have you had a moment when you could not refrain from worshiping the Lord?

 How did that shape your walk with Him?

While the elders sang their praises and thanksgiving for the redemption of man, the angels joined in with praise and worship of their own. They were all focused on the Lamb. They sang with loud voices that He is worthy and deserving of all honor, praise, and glory. John tells us that there was an innumerable company of angels. Contrast this beautiful and overwhelming display around the throne with the grief that John had at first. It was a case of two extremes.

The elders started the worship, the angels joined in, and then John tells us that every creature on earth, in heaven, under the earth, and in the sea took part in declaring blessing and praises to Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb. What started out as lament over the state of the world and how hopeless things seemed, turned into a worship experience of epic proportions. What changed? Jesus showed up. The only One who is worthy of such praise. The only One who can save. The only One who can make a difference and redeem people trapped in brokenness. Jesus is not simply a good option; Jesus is the only solution to the problem facing the world today. When we realize and accept this, the only response is to worship Him and share about Him with all the people we can. He is our only hope.



Application: What do you need to do in response to what you've learned about Jesus today?

Conclusion

No one would argue that the world is in trouble. We have a serious problem that can't be fixed with self-help books or more effort. Christians should look around, take note of the brokenness we see, and be moved by it. John showed us what it looks like to care so much about the fate of others that we are moved to tears and grief. Though that level of care causes us to feel vulnerable, it is in keeping with the heart of God.

We need to have hearts that are broken over the sinful state of the world. Christ followers will see the pain and suffering that accompanies sin and be moved to do something about it. How soft is your heart toward people who need Jesus? Do you look at them in judgment or with compassion? Are you moved to help them see the futility of searching for answers in all the wrong places? Do you go out of your way to share Christ? How can we let them go on in the world without sharing the hope we have?

John reminded us in this scene from his vision that nothing but Jesus will make a difference. Only Jesus is found to be worthy enough to open the scrolls and reveal the judgment coming for the world. Only Jesus was the perfectly innocent sacrifice that willingly laid down His life to ransom ours. Only Jesus is the solution to our problems. He is essential to life and when we realize this truth the only response will be to worship Him and call out as the elders, angels, and all the creatures did. We will declare His power and glory forever. Amen.

- ❓ What have you put your hope in instead of Jesus? Where has that failed you? Why is Jesus the only answer to your problems? How have you learned this to be true?
- ❓ How do you need to respond to Jesus in worship today?
- ❓ How will you share the hope you have in Christ with someone else this week?

Prayer of Response

Thank God for His perfect plan for your life. Confess the places you have been looking for hope outside of Christ. Commit to trusting in Jesus alone to be your solution in life.

Additional Resources

- *Exalting Jesus in Revelation* by Daniel Akin
- *Revelation Chapters 1-5* by J. Vernon McGee
- *Be Victorious* by Warren Wiersbe

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



For Next Week

Session Title

- How Can They Believe?

Main Passages

- Romans 10:1-17

Session Outline

1. Futile Attempts at Righteousness (Romans 10:1-8)
2. True Righteousness by Faith (Romans 10:9-13)
3. Urgency of Sharing the Gospel (Romans 10:14-17)

Memorize

Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Look, the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered so that he is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

- Revelation 5:5

Historical Context of Revelation

Purpose

Much of the book of Revelation focuses on events at the end of the age (eschatology), more so than any other book in the Bible. But it also focuses on practical choices that believers and unbelievers must make in the course of their lives that have far-reaching consequences at the end.

Author

The traditional view holds that the author of Revelation is the apostle John, who wrote the Fourth Gospel and the three letters of John. Evidences for this view include the following. (1) The writer referred to himself as “John” (1:4, 9; 22:8). (2) He had personal relationships with the seven churches of Asia Minor (1:4, 11; 2–3). (3) His circumstances at the time of writing (1:9) matched those of John the apostle (who was placed in Asia Minor from about AD 70 to 100 by reliable historical sources from the second century AD). (4) The saturation of the book with Old Testament imagery and echoes implies a Jewish writer, like John, operating in overwhelmingly Gentile Asia Minor.

Setting

The initial audience that received the book of Revelation was a group of seven local churches in southwest Asia Minor (1:11; 2–3). Some of these congregations were experiencing persecution (2:9–10, 13), probably under the Roman emperor Domitian (ruled AD 81–96). Others had doctrinal and practical problems (2:6, 13–15, 20–23). Also behind these surface problems was the backdrop of unseen but powerful spiritual warfare (2:10, 14, 24; 3:9).

Special Features

The resurrected, glorified Jesus Christ revealed himself to the apostle John, who had been imprisoned “on the island called Patmos” (1:9). Christ’s twofold purpose was: (1) to “unveil” a spiritual diagnosis for seven of the churches in Asia Minor with which John was familiar (chaps. 2–3), and (2) to reveal to John a series of visions setting forth events and factors related to the end times (chaps. 4–22).

Extended Commentary

Revelation 5:1-14

5:1 The right hand of God symbolizes power and authority. With writing on both sides echoes Ezk 2:9–10, where God showed the prophet a scroll with words written “on the front and back ... of lamentation, mourning, and woe.” The scroll John saw foretold woe (8:13; 9:12; 11:14), but it also disclosed God’s perfect plan (symbolized by the seven seals) of judgment and the redemption of his creation, which will culminate in the end times. Because the outer edge of the scroll was sealed, the contents could be seen only when all seven seals were removed. Thus, as the seals are opened in chap. 6, what takes place is not the content of the entire scroll, but only those judgments that precede it being fully opened.

5:2–4 The apostle John was emotionally distraught because no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was found worthy to open the scroll and read the destiny of the world.

5:5–7 Speaking of Jesus as the Lion from the tribe of Judah echoes the messianic prophecy in Gn 49:9–10. Christ was able to open the scroll and its seven seals on the basis of an accomplished fact—his death on the cross like a slaughtered lamb (Is 53:7; Jn 1:29). In the apocalyptic book of Daniel, horns stand for power and authority (Dn 7:8, 20, 24). God’s sending of the seven spirits immediately after the description of the redemptive work of the Lamb (5:6) may preview “the eternal gospel” being preached climactically to the entire world in 14:6–7. The Lamb taking the scroll out of the right hand of the Father signifies a transfer of authority, allowing the Lamb to fulfill the contents of the scroll (i.e., the judgments and other events of the rest of the Apocalypse). For a parallel account, see Dn 7:13–14.

5:8 Believers’ prayers are described as filling golden bowls before the throne of God. The gold emphasizes their reality and exceeding value to God. The word saints means “holy ones.” These are not elite and exceptional Christians. Instead, the NT uses this term for all believers in Christ (Rm 1:7).

5:9–10 The new song sung in heaven about Christ is inspired by his redemptive work, the shedding of his blood on the cross. The target group for redemption (described as every tribe ... nation; cp. 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15, where the same terms are used in differing order) is the same group that is identified in the Great Commission: “all nations” (Mt 28:19). The reference to Christ’s shed blood and the phrase a kingdom and priests echo Rv 1:5–6 and may be partially fulfilled in heaven in 7:15. The promise that they will reign on the earth is fulfilled in 20:6.

5:11–14 On the living creatures, see note at 4:6–7. On the elders, see note at 4:3–4. This scene looks ahead to the time when “every knee will bow ... and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Php 2:10–11).¹

References

1. *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

Author Bio

Daniel Akin (Exalting Jesus in Revelation)

Daniel L. Akin is the president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. He holds a Ph.D. in Humanities from the University of Texas at Arlington and has authored or edited many books and Bible commentaries including *Ten Who Changed the World* and *A Theology for the Church*.

J. Vernon McGee (Revelation Chapters 1-5)

Dr. J. Vernon McGee (1904-1988) spent more than 50 years teaching the Bible on his “Thru the Bible” radio broadcast. He pastored for more than 40 years and has authored many best-selling books, including *Doctrine for Difficult Days*.

Warren Wiersbe (Be Victorious)

Warren W. Wiersbe, former pastor of the Moody Church and general director of *Back to the Bible*, has traveled widely as a Bible teacher and conference speaker. Because of his encouragement to those in ministry, Dr. Wiersbe is often referred to as “the pastor’s pastor.” He has ministered in churches and conferences throughout the United States as well as in Canada, Central and South America, and Europe. Dr. Wiersbe has written over 150 books, including the popular BE series of commentaries on every book of the Bible, which has sold more than four million copies. At the 2002 Christian Booksellers Convention, he was awarded the Gold Medallion Lifetime Achievement Award by the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association. Dr. Wiersbe and his wife, Betty, live in Lincoln, Nebraska.