

Doctrine of the Lamb - Part 3

by J. Sidlow Baxter

This sermon explores the centrality and supremacy of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, in scripture and worship.

Duration: 47:15

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Revelation 5:1-5

Topics: "Book Of Revelation", "The Lamb"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the significance of the number four in the material creation and its representation in various aspects of life. The sermon then focuses on the book of Revelation, specifically chapter 5, where a scroll with seven seals is seen in the right hand of God. The speaker emphasizes the importance of finding someone worthy to open the book and loose its seals, as no one in heaven or on earth is initially found worthy. However, one of the elders reassures the speaker that the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has overcome and is worthy to open the book. The sermon concludes with a call to focus on the figure of the Lamb and to offer adoring praise to him.

Transcript

My dear friends, this morning we continue and complete our trio of studies in the Bible Doctrine of the Lamb. And it is my longing prayer, as I now address you again, that all others, with spontaneous eagerness and with easy concentration, shall focus the gaze of our grateful heart upon our lovely, lovely, lovely Saviour. I will confess again, I have real trepidation in my mind, as I broach this subject again to you.

Who am I that I should speak of such as Him? Anything that I can try to say about Him this morning will be almost like lifting up a flickering paper to help the sun to shine, or like trying to decorate an alpha star with pencils. It's almost as presumptuous as trying to paint the petals of the polyanthus with a schoolboy's paintbrush, or to improve on the glory of a full-blown summer rose. For He is the incomparable, the fairest among ten thousand, the altogether loveliest, the sun and the substance of all exquisite perfection.

Oh, what a dear, wonderful Jesus we have, haven't we? Well now, yesterday morning we were, and again this morning we are, contemplating just one aspect in the Bible doctrine of the Lamb, namely, the centrality of the Lamb. And as I prefatorily pointed out yesterday morning, there are three classic passages where the centrality of the Lamb is exhibited. 1 Isaiah 53, 2 Revelation chapter 5, and 3 Revelation, the last three chapters of the Apocalypse, chapters 21 and 22.

I won't cover any of the territory which we traversed yesterday morning. I will simply remind you that in the first of those three passages, Isaiah 53, we have the Lamb amid the throes of His agony. Then in Revelation 5, we have the Lamb amid the throne of His glory.

Finally, in Revelation 21 and 22, the Lamb amid the throng of His people. The first of those passages looks to a humiliation now past, the second to an exaltation now present, and the third to a consummation yet future. We went through Isaiah 53 somewhat yesterday, and now, let me confess it gladly, with a very eager heart in my own bosom, I ask you to turn with me to Revelation chapter 5. Do you have your New Testament with you? The book of Revelation, chapter 5. And while you are turning to it, let me be reminding you that the setting of this chapter is one of surpassing magnificence.

In all holy writ, there is nothing to eclipse the grandeur and the majesty of the scene which is here unveiled to us. The vision is of the rainbow-circled, glory-flashing throne of the Deity in the heaven of heaven, with the heavenly worshippers prostrating themselves around the throne in profound adoration and exulting praise. The vision quickly moves on to the climactic act in which the slain but now risen Lamb is constituted joint occupant with the Eternal Father in the seat of supreme authority.

Thereupon, the vision reaches its spectacular and moving finale with the one hundred million and millions more of the angel host and all other beings throughout the whole universe unitedly uttering themselves in a thunder of adoring praise to the Lamb, Lion, King amid the throne. Well now, let's look inside the chapter a little, beginning at verse one and reading first to verse five. And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the outside sealed with seven seals.

And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof. And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to loop thereon. And I wept much because no one was found worthy to open the book or to loop thereon but one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not, behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome to open the book and the seven seals thereof.

End of quote. Now that seven sealed book or scroll obviously is not the book of the past for that is already unrolled and opened. Nor is it the record of the unfolding present for the hand of time itself is unrolling that.

It is the book of the yet to be revealing the finalities of human history, the winding up of present mysteries, the future climaxes of the divine purpose and the ultimate issues of human destiny. We know that such is the meaning of the seven sealed book because of what we see and hear and learn as the Lamb afterwards successively opens the seven seals. It is not surprising of course that John wept much because no one was found equal to breaking the seven seals.

For is there anything of more concern to us human beings than to learn how the mysterious conflict of good and ill, good and evil, of light and darkness, how the struggle is going at last to issue after the age long war. And is there anything of more concern to us to know what our destiny is going to be in that endless futurity on the other side of the grave. We recall the consternation of Egypt's magicians when none of them could unseal the meaning of Pharaoh's dream and how Joseph overcame to unloose the meaning of it for doing which he was exalted by Pharaoh to be over all the land of Egypt.

We remember too the furious threat of the enraged Nebuchadnezzar to destroy all the wise men of Babylon because they could not interpret his forgotten dream and how Daniel unlocked the mystery and the meaning of it for which he was exalted to be ruler over all the province of Babylon. There was the

same kind of scene when the awesome handwriting appeared on the palace wall at Belshazzar's feast and only Daniel could unseal its fateful message. On a measurelessly grander scale such is the vision in Revelation 5. Those seven seals symbolize not only the sacred inviolability of the scroll but also the seven fold completeness of the revelation contained in it.

And there is but one hand in the universe can unfasten those seals for there is only one who is worthy. But why must he be worthy and in what sense must he be worthy? Is there not one among all those myriads of the sinless unfallen angels who is worthy to open that book? Is not the glorious archangel Michael worthy to open the book? Cannot the illustrious Gabriel man of God's right hand cannot Gabriel open that book? Can none of the 24 elders can none of the flashing seraphim who are nearest to the throne of God of all created beings can none of all that mighty host in heaven be worthy to open the seven seal scroll? No, not one of them. There's only one who is worthy and I'll tell you why he alone is the worthy one.

First, he is the only being in the universe who has vanquished Satan. The only one who in the days of his true manhood here on earth met and defeated our arch foe Lucifer who later became Satan. But Jesus conquered Satan not by the inherent might of his divine omnipotence but by the moral power of his sinless manhood he smashed the power of the devil.

He is the solitary vanquisher of Satan and he is the solitary redeemer of men and he is the one and only incarnation of God in human flesh. He is the worthy one. And why must he be worthy? It is because the unsealing of that book carries with it the administrative authority to dispense its contents.

Just as in a much lesser sense the unsealing of the royal dreams lifted Joseph and Daniel to the highest administrative authority so here in Revelation 5 in other words the one who can unloose those seals belongs in that rainbow circled throne as the executive of the Godhead. That is why coinciding with our Lord's taking of the book John suddenly sees, I quote the Lamb in the midst of the throne. Now the first big wonder which we should clearly appreciate here is that this chapter describes not something which is yet to happen but something which has occurred already.

Admittedly there are prospects in it which will reach their final fulfillment in the yet future but the main event that is the enthronement of the Lamb has happened already. Our Lord is even now while we are gathered here in Philae pause and think of it our Lord is even now in that throne of thrones and of course we know this from the verb in verse 5 the Lion of the tribe of Judah hath overcome to open the book but in the Greek the verb tense is the heireis which is more exactly rendered as overcame.

It links back at once to chapter 3 verse 21 where our risen Lord says to him that overcometh I will grant to sit with me in my throne that is his throne as distinct from the fathers it is his coming messianic throne to him that overcometh I will grant to sit with me in my throne even as I also overcame the past tense referring to his life down here on earth even as I also overcame and sat myself down with my father in his throne so he is there already our ascended Lord was telling us this when he wrote those seven letters to the seven churches in Asia I overcame and I sat myself down with my father in his throne so the Lamb is already there as the supreme administrator in the midst of the throne that has already taken place and oh fellow believers what a comfort it is in these days of

wide spreading moral breakdown and defiant lawlessness and social violence and unblushing sexualism and internationally organized anti-godism and the overhanging threat of nuclear war what a comfort to know that despite all appearances to the contrary the sovereign control of history and destiny is still in the hands that bear the nail print and what a comfort to know that these divinely permitted latter day excesses

are the very things which as foretold will precipitate his return very soon now in flaming power to trample out all such evil and to bring in his glorious global Christocracy but now glance at a few of the arresting incidentals in this fifth chapter glance again at verse 5 the elder says to John weep not the lion of the tribe of Judah the root of David overcame to open the

book John therefore looks to see the lion but instead to his utter surprise he sees a little lamb for the Greek word is not the usual word for a lamb the Greek word means the youngest of the flock and John instead of seeing the lion for which he looked saw a little lamb right in the midst of all that glory a little lamb with all the marks of having just been killed and yet standing there alive just killed but there alive as the center along with God himself of all that celestial splendor so the lamb is the lion here is the supreme vindication of the truth that right is might that humility is majesty that the final inheritance is with the meek that light has the final victory over darkness and that virtue shall at last trample evil underfoot the lamb who once was slain is the lion who now

must reign the victim is the victor the crucified is the crown the servant and savior of all is now the sovereign and ruler of all as lamb he is redeemer as lion he is king he is the lamb lion God man redeemer king but now see in verses 5 and 6 the 7 great facts about the lamb and like all other symbolic 7's in scripture the 7 here is comprised of 4 and 3 let me just look off from my notes for a minute to make a little incidental comment wherever you find the number 7 used symbolically in the bible it is never the addition of 6 and 1 or 5 and 2 but always of 3 and 4 the reason for that being that 4 is the number of man as a creature just as 6 is the number of man as a sinner and the man of sin who is to appear at the end of this age will be emphatically 6 6 6 and 3 of course is the

symbolic number for the tri-unity of the Godhead err I'm almost tempted to digress a little but I must overcome the temptation because the clock goes tick tick tick and I don't want to have to hurry at the end but let me quickly remind you as human beings we are surrounded everywhere by the conditioning number 4 it's the number of the material creation there are just the four points of the compass north, south, east, west there are just the four parts of the day the morning, the afternoon and the evening and the darkness which we call night and there are just the four parts of the year the spring, the summer, the autumn, the winter and there are just the four members of the human family father, mother, son, daughter you may ring the changes on the latter two as often as you will but it

always has to be one or the other and I suppose even in these days of science it is still true in a popular way that the whole material creation consists of earth, air, fire, water I won't dilate longer upon the matter but 4 is the conditioning number the characteristic and symbolic number of the physical creation and of man as a physical being now 3 as I remarked is the number of the deity and therefore the special symbolical number of our Lord Jesus Christ Son of God and God the Son and Son of Man his number is 7 he is the perfect union of God and Man a secondary meaning of the number 7 is that of divine human completeness or perfection well now I mustn't speak more about numbers mind you the numeral system observed in the Bible is just as engrossing as it is edifying but no more of

that just here notice now the 7 things predicated of our Lord 4 things referring to his manhood and 3 attributes appertaining to his Godhead here are the 4 concerning his human nature 1 the Lion of Judah that is the promised deliverer of his people 2 the Root of David that is the promised shepherd king 3 the Lamb slain that is the promised sin bearer and redeemer and 4 the worthy one that is the promised glory of Israel in whom is fulfilled all that seers ever saw and prophets ever promised and psalmists ever sung and now see the 3 infinite attributes predicated of him the Lamb has 7 horns the horn is the symbol of

strength and 7 the number of completeness or perfection 7 horns is the symbol of omnipotence and 7 eyes the eye is the organ of vision 7 eyes represent all vision that is

omniscience God can do all that is doable and God knows all that is knowable omnipotence and omniscience 7 eyes which are the 7 spirits of God sent forth into all the earth that is simultaneous presence everywhere and all the time that is the other divine attribute of omnipresence now 7 horns, 7 eyes, 7 spirits into all the earth omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence friends, those are the exclusive attributes of God the Lamb besides being promised deliverer governor, redeemer and glory of Israel is none other and none less than God incarnate he to whom these divine attributes are ascribed must not only be exalted he must be worshipped therefore we are immediately told that the 4 living ones and the 4 and 20 elders now fell down before the Lamb having every one of them harps and golden

vials full of odors which are the prayers of saints the harps represent worship in the form of praise and the incense vials represent worship in the form of prayer in other words the same kind of praise and prayer which are offered to God the everlasting father are now offered to the Lamb that is to the risen and exalted Lord Jesus as God the Son incarnated in humanhood friends, there is no unitarianism in heaven our Lord Jesus is no mere ideal man with a God given laurel on his brow neither is he some exalted demiurge or demigod of the Jehovah's Witnesses brand in that pure worship of yonder where the Lamb is in the midst of the throne he is worshipped not only as the Son of God but as God the Son and if they worship him as God up there I'm going to worship him as God down here say Amen

or out you go see now the tremendous climax of the whole scene the countless myriads of the angel hosts unite in the following sublime outburst of heaven-fold the number of perfection again the angels break out into this sublime heaven-fold praise of the Lamb worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive 1. the power 2. the riches 3. the wisdom 4. the might 5. the honor 6. the glory and 7. the blessing then augmenting and consummating the praise of the angelic hosts the whole vast universe joins in the super glorious anthem of acclamation described in the closing verses of the chapter and because it's the totality of the material creation now you have the number 4 again it says and every creature which is in heaven and on earth and under the earth and over the sea and all that are in them

I heard saying 1. blessing and 2. honor and 3. glory and 4. dominion unto him that sitteth on the throne and unto the Lamb unto the ages of the ages oh excuse me friends hallelujah hmm I could shake you how plain is the meaning of all this God has put the Lamb in the place of absolute supremacy and centrality let us keep him where God has put him he is central in prophecy and central in history central in the worship of heaven central in the adoration of saints and angels central in the government and ultimate homage of the whole universe central in his atonement as the one true savior of men central in his exaltation as the one true king of all creation hmm and now time is running away quickly so briefly finally look at the third of these passages where the centrality of the Lamb is

outstandingly exhibited that is Revelation chapters 21 and 22 these last two chapters of the apocalypse are the matchlessly sublime consummation of divine revelation as given to us in the holy scriptures see again the opening words of chapter 21 and I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away the sea is no more and I saw the holy city the new Jerusalem coming down coming down out of heaven out of heaven from God made ready as a bride adorned for her husband what a picture it must have been so the passage which ensues is not a description of heaven as most people seem to think but of a city which comes down out of heaven and must therefore not be equated with heaven it comes down out of heaven and is set up here on this planet in verse 24 we

are told that quote the nations shall walk by the light of it and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it and verse 26 adds that the glory and honor of the nation shall be brought to it and chapter 22 verse 2 tells us that the tree of life now made accessible again shall yield its fruit monthly for the healing that is for the continually renewed health of mark the wording of the nation so this is something that is going to consummate human history on this planet see the glory of that apocalyptic city in chapter 21 I pick out verses 10 and 11 and 18 and 19 and 21 and he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God having the glory of God her light was like unto a stone most

precious as it were a jasper stone clear as crystal dot dot dot dot and the building of the wall thereof was jasper and the city was pure gold like unto pure glass and the twelve gates were twelve pearls et cetera it is a fascinating and wonderful description but listen to me friends we miss the sublimest meaning of it all unless we see that it is the Lamb who is the center of it all in that description of the queen's city of God's coming new order did you happen to have noticed it there are just seven mentions of the Lamb had you noticed that in case you hadn't let me point out the seven are you ready one in chapter 21 verse 9 come hither I will show thee the bride the wife of the Lamb so first the Lamb is the bridegroom two in chapter 21 verse 14 the city had twelve foundations and in

them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb so second the Lamb is the foundation three I saw no temple that was an amazing feature of it to John you can't find any city of antiquity without its temple and the glory of the nation Israel was its wonderful temple John looked for the temple but it wasn't there he says I saw no temple the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple so thirdly the Lamb is the object of worship and the living temple four in chapter 21 verse 23 the glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the luminary so fourthly the Lamb is the radiance of that celestial city five in chapter 21 verse 27 only they enter who are written in the book of life of the Lamb so fifthly the Lamb is the portal to that city six in chapter 22 verse 1 a pure river of water of life

clear as crystal proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb so sixthly the Lamb is the very life of that city and seven chapter 22 verse 3 the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it so seventhly the Lamb is the king of that city O brothers and sisters in our holy calling think of it again this sevenfold relationship of the Lamb to that ineffable city and society of the new world which is yet to be one the Lamb is the bridegroom two the Lamb is the foundation three the Lamb is the temple and four the Lamb is the radiance and five the Lamb is the portal and six the Lamb is the life and seven the Lamb is the king in a word he's the center of everything how sublimely wonderful is this sevenfold relationship between the heavenly bridegroom and that queen city of the new earth and

how rapturously it lights up the indissoluble bond that binds the people of Christ to their adorable Lord and Savior the Lamb is the bridegroom and his people are the bride so it is a loving union the Lamb is the foundation and his people are the building so it is a lasting union the Lamb is both the temple and the object of his people's worship so it is an adoring union the Lamb is the luminary or irradiating glory light so it is a transfiguring union the Lamb is the portal and nothing that defileth can ever gain access so it is a holy union the Lamb is the life and we share his life forever so it is a life union his life is in all his people and the Lamb is king and his people reign with him forever so it is a royal union thus the Lamb is the ever living ever loving everlasting center

and supreme glory of that coming celestial city O friends what a Savior he is the light of the city is the face of Jesus the music of the city is the name of Jesus the harmony of the city is the praise of Jesus the theme

of the city is the love of Jesus the joy of the city is the presence of Jesus the employment of the city is the service of Jesus the strength of the city is the omnipotence of Jesus and the magnetic center and superlative glory of the city is Jesus himself and the duration of the city is the eternity of Jesus ooooh was I shouting a bit then Jerusalem the golden then with faithless treasures blessed ooooh heavenly Zion glorious thy raptured saints possessed I know not ooooh I know not what joys await me there what radiancy of glory what bliss beyond compare as we think of

what awaits us there perhaps we can sympathetically enter into the wistful sentiment of that dear old Puritan who said my friend when I get yonder I'll spend the first thousand years gazing at Jesus then maybe I'll have a look round the bride eyes not her raiment but her beloved face I will not gaze on glory but on thy king of grace not on the crown he giveth but on his pierced hand the lamb is all the glory in Emmanuel's land isn't that how you feel say yes it'll do you good yes the lamb is all the glory in that fair realm where with sin and the curse utterly gone forever Christ and his owner one forever more and how wonderfully it climaxes the bible doctrine of the centrality of the lamb we have seen the centrality of the lamb as set forth in Isaiah 53 and in Revelation 5 and in

Revelation 21 and 22 the lamb amid the thrones of his agony the lamb amid the throne of his glory the lamb amid the throng of the glorified we have seen him bearing our sin on earth wearing the crown in heaven sharing his glory with us forever behold then the triune centrality of the lamb the cross the crown the city crucifixion coronation consummation he is central not only in prophecy and history as we have said not only in the adoration of the heavenly host and in the government of the universe but throughout futurity even to the ages of the ages the one true savior of men the king of kings and lord of lords the consummator of the ages and the everlasting glory of his people how can we keep it back glory to the lamb let changing theological fashions come and go let twentieth century

cynicisms be what they may let men deride let demons fume let oppositions multiply the only message which saves men is the gospel of the lamb more than ever the lamb must be the center of our preaching and planning and serving of our faith and hope and love more concentrated than ever let us proclaim him let us be proud of him let us uplift him let us glory in him let us love him and let us live for him and if necessary let us die for him and let us beware of becoming so professionally theological we ministers or so religiously busy or so pragmatically anti-sentimental that we do not thrill at the prospect of seeing him the king in his beauty and the land of far distances I finish let me quote as I close not merely one glimpse but forever at home with him ever to be with him in that glory

celestial where shimmers the crystal sea yet there even there in such glory will anything ever efface that rapturous moment of moments my first first sight of his amen

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