

Who Is Worthy?

EVERY PERSON DESIRES AT LEAST SOME RESPECT AND HONOR. Most of us are respected and honored by our co-workers, families or friends. Each person desires to be considered worthy of something significant, but some of us want more. Simon Tournay is an example of a man who wanted too much. History says that after completing his studies at Oxford, he moved to Paris, France where he became a very prominent person and eventually the chief doctor of the Sorbonne (a university in France). He was so proud that he said that Aristotle was greater than Moses and Jesus Christ, and that he (Tournay) was greater than Aristotle. He wanted respect and honor. He felt that he was worthy of such honor; but at the end of his life, he became senile. He could not remember one letter in any book, or one thing that he had ever done. God humbled the man. Tournay was not worthy of the honor that he gave himself.

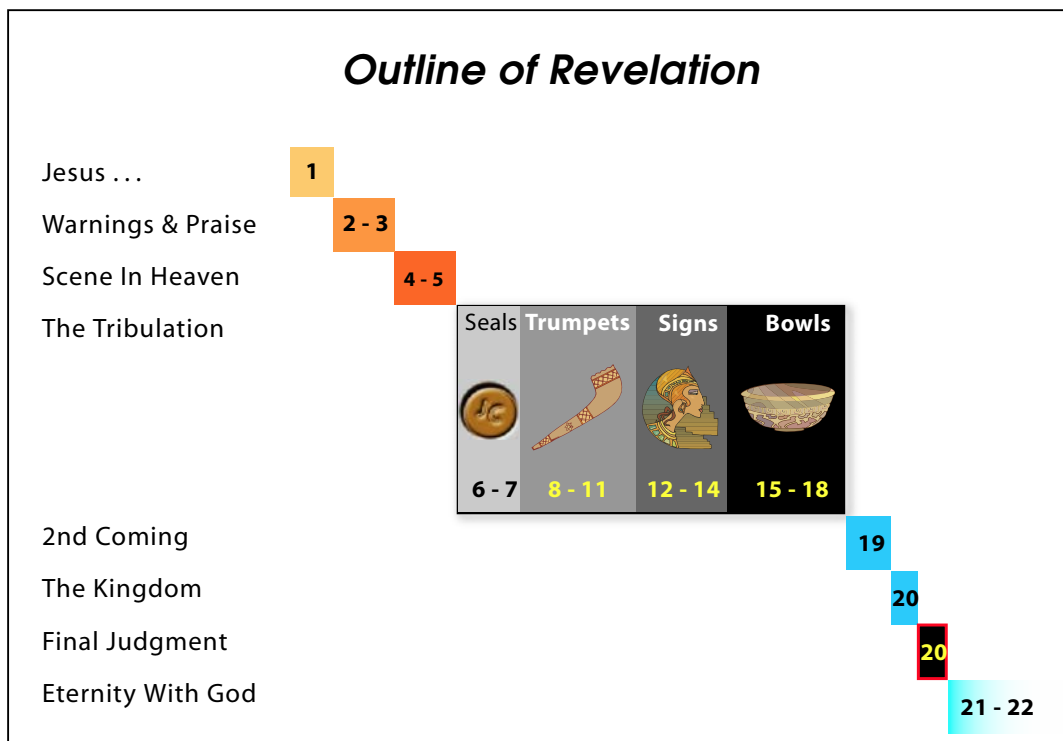
THE SCROLL. In our last study in Revelation 4, the Apostle John was taken to heaven in a vision and there he saw God the Father sitting on the throne with the Holy Spirit and four living creatures before Him on a sea of glass like crystal. God was also surrounded by twenty-four elders. The chapter ended with the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders giving praise and honor to God. What a great vision! What an honor for the Apostle John.

In this study, we find ourselves in Revelation 5 and the

apostle's vision continues.

And 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. (NASB) Rev. 5:1

The English word for “book” misses the fact that in Jesus’ day books did not have pages or bindings. The English word should be scroll, because the actual Greek word is BIBLION





which means “scroll.”

Scrolls were made from the skins of sheep or goats or from the vellum of calves. The skins were washed, the hair removed and then rubbed with pumice and dressed with chalk. Finally the skins were cut into sheets (7.5 inches by 10 inches or 19 cm by 25 cm) and up to twenty sheets were glued together (less than 35 ft or 10.7 m). The scrolls were unrolled from left to right and were written in columns 2 to 3 inches wide (5-8 cm). Is this the type of scroll that God the Father had in His hand? We do not know, but the use of seven seals was something that would have been familiar to the apostle.

This type of scroll was common for ancient legal documents (Jer. 32:10-12). The seals were apparently attached to the document as it was written. So the first seal would have been attached on the inside; the next seal would have been attached later after more words were written. This process would have continued until the legal document was completed. This scroll had seven seals. So the first seal on the end

of the scroll would have been broken and the words would have been read. Then the next seal would have been broken so that more words could have been read. This process would continue until the document was completely read. This was an important legal scroll since, it had so many seals. It must have been important also since God the Father was holding the scroll.

WHO IS WORTHY? Then the Apostle John heard a strong angel ask, “Who is worthy to open the scroll?”

And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?” And no one in heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look into it. And I began to weep greatly, because no one was found worthy to open the book, or to look into it . . . (NASB) Rev. 5:2-4

Who is worthy? The answer was that no created being on or under the earth or in heaven was worthy. Simon Tour-

nay, the doctor of Sorbonne, was not worthy. Nor was any apostle worthy.

Is this why the apostle cried? He might have thought that he was worthy, since he had been invited to heaven. Did he forget that he was brought there to write the book of Revelation? Did he forget that he was just a servant? We do not know, but we do know that God's servants often forget that it is God who gives us our opportunities because He wants to use us. It is easy to forget that God does not really need us to accomplish His purposes. Moses discovered that when God did not allow him to enter the Promised Land (Num. 20). Moses was unfaithful, and God did not allow him to enter the land. So Moses died in the land of Moab because of his sin, and God used Joshua to take the people into the land. Deuteronomy 34:6-7 tells us that Moses was physically strong and not ready to die, but yet God ended his ministry.

Moses had endured the people for forty years and had waited forty years to enter the Promised Land, but his sin prevented him from getting there. He ended his life with his dream unfulfilled. His ministry was over and God was going to use Joshua. There is a great lesson here for us and it is this: God does not really need you or me to accomplish His ministry. Moses sinned and God used someone else - Joshua. Moses was not worthy. God is looking for faithfulness and holiness.

HE IS WORTHY! Then one of the twenty-four elders told the Apostle John to stop crying because there was one who is worthy to open the scroll - Jesus Christ.

... 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." 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. (NASB) Rev. 5:5-6

These are the descriptions of Jesus. The Old Testament says that Jesus is the Lion from the Tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:9). He is a descendant of David (Isa. 11:2; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-

17) from the tribe of Judah (Luke 3:23, 33) and He is the Lamb of God (Isa. 53:7; John 1:29). Who is worthy? Jesus is worthy!

What did Jesus do? Did He worship God the Father before He received the scroll? The answer is found in the next verse.

And He came, and He took it out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. (NASB) Rev. 5:7

No! He did not worship the Father because He is God Himself. Jesus just took the scroll. He did not worship or bow down. Everyone else did but not Jesus. This is another great indication that Jesus is God.

THE RESPONSE. How did heaven respond? They worshipped Jesus by singing a new song to Him. They did not sing an old song but a new one!

And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. "And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." (NASB) Rev. 5:8-10

The new song honors Jesus. It praises Him for dying for every person on this earth, and it anticipates the future when we will reign together with Jesus in the 1,000 year kingdom. Remember that Jesus told his disciples that they would eat and drink with Him in the kingdom. Have you ever wondered if we would do anything other than praise and worship God? This passage says that we will be doing more than that in the kingdom. We will have responsibilities to carry out. We will co-reign with Jesus! I hope this sounds wonderful to you. Jesus will include us in His victory and honor. The kingdom will be fun! This will be better than any party. We will be with Jesus.

Then heaven will ring out with more praise to God the Father and Jesus Christ. Millions and maybe billions of angels will join in the praise and worship of both God the Father and Jesus Christ.

And 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, 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." 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." And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped. (NASB) Rev. 5:11-14

Honor will be given to both of them equally. This is one more proof that Jesus is God. The New Testament clearly teaches that Jesus is God. There is no difference between them.

In our next study, we see what happens as Jesus breaks each seal. We will see what happens as the seals of the scroll are broken and we are allowed to understand the contents of the scroll.

CONCLUSION. Do you think that heaven and the coming kingdom will be boring? I think it will be wonderful, exciting, and an incredible adventure to be included with Jesus. He has given us this promise . . .

If we endure, we shall also reign with Him . . . (NASB) 2 Tim. 2:12

Does Jesus include us because we are worthy? I believe that George Mueller captured the answer when he said,

It ill becomes the servant to seek to be rich, and great, and honored in that world where his Lord was poor . . . and despised.

How should we, who are unworthy, respond? The Holy Spirit reminds us that . . .

The LORD reigns, let the peoples tremble; He is enthroned above the cherubim, let the earth shake! The LORD is great in Zion, And He is exalted above all the peoples. Let them praise Thy great and awesome name; Holy is He. (NASB) Ps. 99:1-3

Only Jesus is worthy. Let us praise Him!