

In the previous chapter, Revelation chapter 4, we saw why we can face what is to come. When we keep our eyes fixed on God, when we are looking in the right place, everything else will make sense. Then we will be able to see that God is in control. Then we'll be able to see that God is greater than all things. Then we will be able to see that God is in the center of it all. We will be able to face whatever is to come. But now in Revelation chapter 5, we have another reason why we can face all things. We can face all things, Christians, because Christ has conquered, and he reigns as king forever!

So the chapter begins, then, with a vision of a scroll. We hear in verse 1 of our reading: "Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals." Now, a scroll like this in John's time was a legal document, something like a will. And these scrolls were sealed up with many seals in the presence of witnesses so that no one would be able to open the scroll without having permission to do so. In that way, it's a lot like what we do today, even if we don't use scrolls and seals. But this scroll in particular is a picture of God's plan for the future. It is his intentions for everything that is to come. It's as if he had written down everything that he was going to do, everything that is going to happen in a scroll and sealed it up and now keeps it at his right hand. And we will see this scroll opened in the next chapter seal by seal, and as each seal is broken open, judgments will come down upon the earth. Because that is part of God's plan for the future: to bring judgment upon those who oppose him. But this scroll is not only about judgment. This scroll includes everything that's going to happen. Everything that we must suffer as Christians is in that scroll. Everything that we must endure for the sake of the kingdom of God is in that scroll. And more than this, our final goal is also there: the glory that will be ours when we are with God forever. All of that is written in this scroll. The whole future has been laid out. God's plan for everything that is to come is in it. This scroll is God's will.

But who can look into that scroll? Who can carry out the will of God? Who can break open the seals and bring all of these things to pass? That's the question that's now asked in heaven. Verses 2 and 3 of our reading: "And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?' And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it." No one is worthy, we are told. No one has the authority to open this scroll and to look into it. No creature in heaven, on earth, or under the earth is able to carry out the will of God. If it were left up to us to put God's will into action, to carry it out for the future, then God's will would never be done. If it were left up to us, all of his plans for the future would fail. We would have nothing to hold on to. All the promises that he made would be broken. God's will would fail at the exact moment that we needed it the most. If it was left up to us, we would never be able to carry it out. This is why John begins to weep. Not because he's jealous or upset that he didn't get chosen or something like that. John is not selfish. Rather, he is weeping for the sake of God. He's weeping because he thinks that God's will is going to fail. He's weeping because he thinks that the future is now going to become uncertain. He's weeping because he thinks that evil might win and that God would not be glorified through it all. John is weeping for the sake of God.

And Christians, how often are we like John here? How often do we hear about evil growing in the world, and we start to wonder if the future could ever bring anything good for us? I went on the Internet this afternoon just to look at the headlines in the news, and it was everything that we expect it to be these days: wars and shootings and bombings and killings and all kinds of terrible

things. It's enough to make us think that there will never be any good ever again, that it's all going downhill, that it's completely gone. What are we supposed to do? And Christians, how often do we hear about churches getting smaller and smaller with each passing year, and we start to wonder if the Church as a whole is going to fail? We seem so helpless to do anything about it. What are we supposed to do about it? What are we supposed to do when it seems like we are losing? How are we supposed to face what is to come? We want God's will to be done, yes, but we so often wonder how it's going to be done, especially in the face of everything around us. What are we supposed to do? And even if we don't weep loudly like John does, that same feeling is so often there.

But weep no more, we are told! An elder says to John in verse 5: "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." The Lion has conquered! The Root has overcome! Jesus is worthy to take the scroll and to open it. Jesus has the authority to put God's will into action. He will carry all of these things forward. We can't do it, but Jesus can. And he will do it because he has won the victory!

And Jesus is called the Lion of Judah because of a prophecy that was made about him in the book of Genesis. Genesis chapter 49 says: "Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, and as a lion, who dares rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples." So Christ is called a lion because he is a mighty king. The scepter of authority belongs to him. All authority belongs to him. All the nations will come and bow before him, because he is the King of Kings promised from of old. And he now reigns over his kingdom forever. So weep no more!

And Jesus is also called the Root of David for the same reason. In Isaiah chapter 11, we are told: "In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious." Jesse is David's father, of course, so saying the root of Jesse is the same thing as the root of David. But this Root of David will bring in the kingdom. This Root of David will stand as a beacon for the whole world. All will see him and come to him! And Jesus is that Root, Christians. He is the promised Son of David reigning as king forever. He reigns in the stead of his father David, and his kingdom will never come to an end. So weep no more!

And to show us even more why there is no need to weep about what is to come, John now shows us Jesus in his glory. We are told in verse 6: "And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth." The Lion of Judah is a Lamb! We might've expected a fierce beast, but instead we see a helpless lamb. And not just a lamb, but one which had been slain, a lamb which still has all the marks of its being killed upon it. Even in heaven Jesus has the holes in his hands and the wound in his side. They are there forever. Because Jesus did not conquer through force, the way that we might expect a lion to do, but rather, Jesus conquered through his death. Jesus has overcome by being defeated. Jesus now reigns because he was once crushed underfoot. And Christians, this also shows us why we don't need to fear what is to come. If Jesus suffered in this way, then why should we be afraid if we have to do the same thing? The way of Jesus is the way of the cross.

There is no glory apart from the cross. Through the cross, God shames the strength of the world. Through the cross, Christ has conquered all things. And even if we have to do the same thing for the sake of the kingdom, we can see in Jesus the glory that will be ours. So we don't need to weep anymore, because Jesus who died now reigns forever!

And even his strange appearance shows us why we don't need to weep. He's described as having seven horns and seven eyes. Seven horns being signs of his power and authority, because a horn is a symbol of power. Think of a bull, for example, and how strong he is, and you'll understand why. And seven, of course, is a perfect number, so to have seven horns shows that he has all authority, that he reigns without a rival forever. And the seven eyes are described as being the seven spirits of God, which means that it is the Holy Spirit. Jesus has the Spirit in a way that no one else ever has. Think of his baptism, when the Spirit came down like a dove and rested upon him. And because he has the Spirit, it shows that he has been sent from the Father. God the Father has sent him out into the world to carry out his will, and he will do it without fail. So Christians, weep no more! Jesus will carry out God's will. Christ the Lion who is a Lamb has conquered, and he now reigns as king forever!

And when Jesus takes the scroll, there is no weeping in heaven, but only rejoicing. Because the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders all fall down before Christ, and they begin to sing a new song: "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." Christ is worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because he has redeemed us with his blood. Through his blood, he has made us his own forever. He has done the greatest thing of all in saving us from our sins, and therefore he now rules over all things.

And with that heavenly choir, more voices join in. We are told that a great circle of angels surrounding the throne, surrounding the living creatures, surrounding the elders, angels beyond our ability to number, join in the song and begin to say: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" Because all of the things of this world belong to Jesus. All of its power, all of its wealth, all of its wisdom, all of its might, all of it is his forever. And he is worthy and deserving of all of our might and honor and glory and blessing. It all belongs to him, because he has overcome!

And then in that moment, the choir expands again, Christians. Just imagine that glorious sight when we hear in verse 13 that "I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!'" All of creation joins in the song! Every angel, every man, every woman, every child, everyone who has ever lived and ever will live, all lift up their voices as one, praising God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit for all that he has done. Because all things belong to him, Christians, now and forever! He has overcome and to him all things belong! So weep no more!

So lift up your voices, Christians. Join in the great heavenly hymn. Christ has taken the scroll that is his by right, and he will bring all things to pass. Not one promise of God will fail. Nothing will ever be able to take us away from God. The will of God will be done on earth as it is in heaven, because Christ has conquered! The Lion of Judah has overcome! The Root of David now

reigns forevermore! And the Lamb is victorious over all things. So lift up your voices and sing, because the future belongs to God.

Let us pray. O Lion of Judah, Root of David, who has conquered through your death on the cross, lead us through all that is to come, so that we may join with the whole heavenly host in singing your praises forever; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.