

Andrews University

Digital Commons @ Andrews University

Faculty Publications

2-28-1974

Christ the Lamb

Walter F. Specht
Andrews University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), and the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Specht, Walter F., "Christ the Lamb" (1974). *Faculty Publications*. 4129.
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs/4129>

This Popular Press is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.

CHRIST the LAMB

By WALTER F. SPECHT

ONE OF THE MOST sublime visions of the glory of our great God, the Ruler of all, is the one described in the fourth chapter of the Apocalypse. For John the door of revelation stood open, and he saw a throne with Someone seated on it. He does not attempt to describe this august central Figure, but pictures the brilliant and multicolored light surrounding Him. Behind that glory was God in His transcendent and indescribable mystery.

But that throne and the ineffable "Someone" sitting upon it were to John expressions of God's sovereign majesty, His absolute authority over the world and over the church. It was a dark hour for John and the early Christian communities. Stephen had been stoned, James had been slain by the sword, Paul had been beheaded, Peter had been crucified, and now John was a lonely exile on Patmos. But what a comfort it was to be reminded that God was still on His throne, and that He ruled over all!

Above the throne John saw a rainbow or halo.¹ Ellen White interprets it as an "emblem of grace and love,"² or "a token to God's children of His covenant of grace,"³ or "an assurance that God is true, that in Him is no variability, neither shadow of turning."⁴ About the throne were the four living creatures who offered their ceaseless tribute of praise: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"⁵

The chapter closes with the ascription of praise of the 24 elders, who bowed in obeisance and cast

Walter F. Specht, Ph.D., is professor of New Testament and chairman of the New Testament Department at the Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

their crowns before the throne as they sang: "Worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou didst create all things, and by thy will they existed and were created."⁶

This is the grand climax of the chapter: the praise of God as the Creator of all. He is worthy of worship because He is the source of life and existence.

Chapter 5 is a continuation of this majestic scene, but there is now a shift in emphasis from God the Creator to Christ the Redeemer. In the right hand of that august Throne-sitter there was a scroll,⁷ perfectly sealed with seven seals, containing the secret purposes and plans of God.⁸ Its contents were so extensive that it was written on both sides.⁹ Then a strong angel with a voice that could reach to the farthest limits of the universe uttered the challenge: "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?"¹⁰

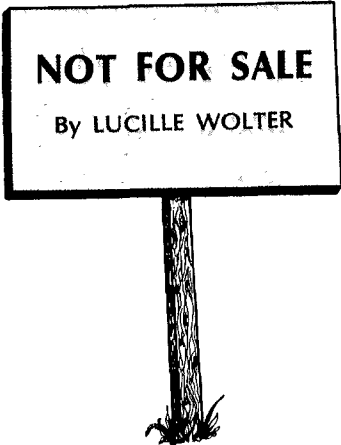
When no one came forward to

answer the challenge, John began to weep. But one of the 24 elders urged him to stop weeping, for he said, "Lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."¹¹ John's tears were quite unnecessary, for our Lord Jesus Christ had the ability to open the book.

The two titles that are here applied to Jesus Christ are worthy of note. He is called first the Lion of Judah. This is an allusion to Jacob's blessing of Judah as recorded in Genesis 49:9, 10. The strength and power of the lion, his undoubted place as king of beasts, make him a fitting symbol of the all-powerful Messiah. The elder declared, "The Lion of the tribe of Judah . . . has conquered." Yet when John actually sees Jesus Christ he does not see Him under the symbol of a lion, but as a lamb. Men since Old Testament times hoped for a Messiah who would be like a lion; the New Testament presents the Messiah as a lamb. Men hoped for a Messiah who would reign in glory; they were given a Man nailed to a cross. Speaking of the symbols of the lion and the lamb, Ellen White wrote: "These symbols represent the union of omnipotent power and self-sacrificing love."¹²

Root of David

The second title, the Root of David, goes back to Isaiah 11:1, if not earlier: "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." Jesse was, of course, the father of David, and this means that the Messiah was to be the son of David. Jesus came from the tribe of Judah and from the family of Da-



Living waters
 Bread of life
 Master artist
 Renowned physician
 Distinguished teacher.
 Perfect peace
 Unbroken promises
 Love everlasting.
 Friend of the friendless
 Hope of the hopeless
 Comfort for the sorrowing
 Balm for the heartbreak
 Forgiveness for the penitent.
 Redemption's story—eternal life,
 Bought with His blood, paid in full.
 Free to all, not for sale.

vid.¹³ In the Gospels, particularly in Matthew, Jesus was frequently called the "son of David."¹⁴

The emergence of the Lamb on the scene is the supreme dramatic moment in the vision of Revelation 5. John writes: "And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb standing."¹⁵ Thus we are introduced for the first time in the book of Revelation to a designation for Jesus Christ that is found 28 times from chapter 5 on. Because of this repeated use of the title "Lamb" we must conclude that we have here one of the characteristic ideas of the Apocalypse.

There are at least two aspects of the Lamb presented in Revelation 5. First, the Lamb still bears the marks of slaughter upon him. "I saw a Lamb standing as though it had been slain."¹⁶ Then John sees the Lamb is alive, for He is standing, but He has upon Him the marks of sacrifice, and the efficacy of His death is present in all its power. The presence of the Lamb there by the throne of the universe with the marks of slaughter upon Him, but standing in the new life of the resurrection, speaks of the sovereignty and victory of sacrificial love.

Second, it is to be noted that this same Lamb, with the marks of sacrifice still visible, is the Lamb with seven horns and seven eyes. A seven-eyed, seven-horned animal of any kind would make a grotesque picture. But these symbols are designed to convey truth. A horn is a well-known symbol of strength and power.¹⁷ The seven horns indicate that the Lamb is perfect in strength. His power is complete. In a word, He is omnipotent.

Perfection of Wisdom

Likewise the seven eyes indicate perfection of vision and, consequently, completeness of knowledge. These seven eyes are further identified as the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.¹⁸ The wording is reminiscent of the fourth chapter of Zechariah, where the seven lamps are said to be "eyes of the Lord, which range through the whole earth."¹⁹ There is no place on earth that is not under the eye of God, and that He does not see. Likewise in Revelation 5 the seven eyes and the spirits sent out into all the earth²⁰ symbolize the perfect wisdom and knowledge of the Lamb, that is, His omniscience. Thus in this picture of the Lamb there is a striking combination of the concepts of ultimate power and the utmost self-giving.

What was it that qualified the

Lamb to unseal the book and open the scroll? It was the fact that the Lamb had conquered! The Lamb had overcome! The Lamb was victorious! Therefore He was able to know and to reveal the secrets of God, and to preside over the working out of God's purposes in the events of history. The Lamb had conquered!

Jesus came to
reveal the character
of God and
to demonstrate
His love. And so the
victory of the
Lamb is a victory
of sacrificial
love.

But how had the Lamb conquered? How had the Lamb come off victorious? Although the Lamb is supreme in power and knowledge, it was not by the use of these that He conquered. There is something paradoxical here. He conquered by being slain. He stood there with the marks of a sacrificial victim upon Him. He did not achieve His victory by force, but by sacrifice.

Jesus came to reveal the character of God and to demonstrate His love. And so the victory of the Lamb is a victory of sacrificial love. This is evidently the central truth of Revelation 5: victory through self-surrender and sacrifice! And in relation to His suffering people, His sacrifice supplies both the example and the enabling power to pass through fiery trial and to conquer with Him. In Revelation 7 the great multitude before the throne are those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.²¹

The death of Christ is the secret of their victory. On the basis of His death for them they are able to stand in white robes before the throne. In chapter 12 the saints again are pictured as conquering "by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death."²²

Victory through sacrificial love—this is the lesson of the Lamb in the Apocalypse! And when the Lamb took the seven-sealed scroll to open it, there was a great anthem of praise sung by the four living creatures and the 24 elders: "Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and has made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth."²³

It was a great song of praise for victory through sacrificial love. This is the greatest chorus of praise the universe can ever hear. It begins with the praise rendered by the four living creatures and the 24 elders. Then all the angels of God, numbering myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands take up the strain: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"²⁴ All the inhabitants of heaven have now joined this mighty anthem of praise to God.

But there is more. It now becomes a universal chorus of praise: "And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein, saying, 'To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever!'"²⁵ Every creature in every part of the universe of God joins in until it reaches a great climax in an unparalleled fortissimo. "Oh, that with yonder sacred throng
We at His feet may fall,
Join in the everlasting song,
And crown Him Lord of all."²⁶

□
Continued next week

REFERENCES

- ¹ A halo is suggested because it "looked like an emerald" (Rev. 4:3, R.S.V.), i.e., bright green.
- ² Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 751.
- ³ ———, *Education*, p. 115.
- ⁴ ———, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 148.
- ⁵ Rev. 4:8. All Bible texts are from the Revised Standard Version.
- ⁶ Verse 11.
- ⁷ Compare Eze. 2:9ff.
- ⁸ For a hint as to part of the contents see *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 294.
- ⁹ Scrolls were rarely more than 30 feet in length; a scroll containing the book of Revelation would require only about 15 feet.
- ¹⁰ Rev. 5:2.
- ¹¹ Verse 5.
- ¹² Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 589.
- ¹³ Matt. 1:1, 16, 20; Luke 2:4; Heb. 7:14.
- ¹⁴ Matt. 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30, 31; 21:9, 15; 22:42, 45.
- ¹⁵ Rev. 5:6.
- ¹⁶ Verse 6.
- ¹⁷ Ps. 132:17; Jer. 48:25; Dan. 7:8, 20, 21, 24; Rev. 17:12, 16, etc.
- ¹⁸ Rev. 5:6.
- ¹⁹ Zech. 4:10.
- ²⁰ See also 2 Chron. 16:9.
- ²¹ Rev. 7:14.
- ²² Chap. 12:11.
- ²³ Chap. 5:9, 10.
- ²⁴ Verse 12.
- ²⁵ Verse 13.
- ²⁶ Edward Perronet, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name."