

Revelation 5:9-10

- The glorification of Christ -

Author: Evert Jan Hempenius

© 2015

www.christianstudylibrary.org

For any questions about this Scripture passage or the notes, please contact us through the Contact Us tab on the website.

Foreword

- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological notes, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline show some overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the book of Revelation. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline either as a “stand alone” or as part of a series.

Context

- ❖ The glorification of the risen Christ is part of the Book of Revelation. This book is like a large painting. You’ll have to look at the whole in order to understand the details.
- ❖ A brief outline of the Book of Revelation:¹

Introduction (Rev. 1:1-3)	
	The origin and command to write this Revelation down.
The Book of Revelation (Rev. 1:4-22:21)	
Rev. 1:4-8	The opening liturgical setting.
Rev. 1:9-3:22	PART 1
Rev. 4:1-22:11	PART 2

¹ This outline for sermons is very brief and does not discuss all the (many) different theories about the structures and outlines of the Book of Revelation. Beale (1999) provides a detailed outline. For discussion see Garrow (1997).

Rev. 22:12-21	The closing liturgical setting.
---------------	---------------------------------

- PART 1: The risen and exalted Christ and his seven messages to the seven churches in the Roman Province Asia.
- PART 2: The heavenly courtroom and the judgment of God, ending with the descent of the new heaven and earth.
 - PART 2: There are three main stages in this part of the Revelation. Each stage is introduced by a vision of the heavenly courtroom in which God resides as the Creator-King and Judge of all creation.

Part 2 (Rev. 4:1-22:11)	
Stage 1	Rev. 4:1-7:17 > the first six seals.
Stage 2	Rev. 8:1-11:14 > (the seventh seal) and the first six trumpets.
Stage 3	Rev. 11:15-22:11 > (the seventh trumpet) and the seven bowls of God's wrath > the two cities.
Stage 1 (Rev. 4:1-7:17)	
Rev. 4:1-5:14	The Heavenly Courtroom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rev. 4:1-11 > The vision of God, King and Creator sitting on his throne, glorified by the creation. • Rev. 5:1-14 > The vision of the Lamb standing in the midst of the heavenly courtroom.
Rev. 6:1-7:17	The opening of the first six seals of the scroll.

- ❖ There is much discussion about the date of writing of the Revelation.
 - Some commentators propose a date near the reign of emperor Nero (A.D. 68).
 - Others propose a date during the reign of emperor Domitian (A.D. 81-96).
 - In the case of the visions of the heavenly courtroom the outcome of this discussion is less important. God reigns in eternity and receives all honour (Rev. 4:11).

Form and structure

- ❖ Revelation 5:8-10 is cast in a liturgical setting in which the Christ is glorified as the one who has conquered.
 - ❖ Revelation 5 consists of three parts, each introduced by “Καὶ εἶδον”, “then I saw.”
 - Rev. 5:1-5 > the One who sits on the throne is holding the scroll.
 - Rev. 5:6-10 > the Lamb is presented as standing at the centre of the throne, worthy to open the scroll.
 - Rev. 5:11-14 > the glorification of the Lamb and the One who sits on the throne.
 - ❖ John makes use of many kinds of figures of speech, creating a vivid image
 - The following can be noted:²
 - **“him who sat on the throne”** (Rev. 5:1). This is an example of **periphrasis** = the substitution of a descriptive word or phrase for a proper name. In this case it is a description of God, the Creator-King (Rev. 4). This evokes reverence.
 - **“no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth”** (Rev. 5:3) is an example of a **merism**. It could have been summarized with “no one.” In this case the creation is divided in three parts. It stresses the fact that *really* no one is worthy to open the scroll.
 - In Rev. 5:2-5 the following words are found in a remarkable fashion. The first line and the fourth line are almost similar, the second and the third are identical. This is an example of a **palindrome**. The function of a palindrome in Hebrew Biblical literature is to draw attention to the center of the palindrome, which contains the main message. In this case the main message is: **“open the scroll or look inside it.”** The Greek text makes this clear.
 - ἀνοίξαι τὸ βιβλίον καὶ λύσαι τὰς σφραγίδας αὐτοῦ³
 - ἀνοίξαι τὸ βιβλίον οὔτε βλέπειν αὐτό
 - ἀνοίξαι τὸ βιβλίον οὔτε βλέπειν αὐτό
 - ἀνοίξαι τὸ βιβλίον καὶ τὰς ἑπτὰ σφραγίδας αὐτοῦ
- Besides being a palindrome, it is also an example of **epistrophe** = the repetition of the same words at the end of a clause. This rhetorical device is used to appeal to the emotions of the audience in order to persuade, inspire, motivate and encourage them. This is exemplified by the emotional reaction of John, when he discovers that really nobody can open the scroll: **“I wept and wept”** (Rev. 5:4).

² Silva Rhetoricae: The Forest of Rhetoric. (n.d.). Retrieved August 13, 2015, from <http://rhetoric.byu.edu/>

³ Nestle, E., Nestle, E., Aland, K., & Aland, B., (1993). *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27. Aufl., Rev. 5:2-5). Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung.

- **“The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David.”** Both designations refer to Old Testament prophecies (Gn. 49:9, Isa. 11, Jer. 23:5-6). It functions like **metaphorical synonyms**. Both metaphors (lion, root of David) refer to the promised Son of David, the Messiah. Synonyms and metaphors are used to an emotional response, in this case a grand expectation.
- **“Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.”** (Rev. 5:6). This is a **composite metaphor** = different **metaphors** (and one **simile**) are combined into one big picture. A metaphor and a simile are comparisons made by referring to one thing as another. The difference between a simile and metaphor is the use of “as”, making in the case of a simile the comparison explicit.
 - Lamb = metaphor, referring to Christ, but also to the Exodus out of Egypt (Ex. 12; Jno. 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7). Especially in Revelation this metaphor is applied to Christ Jesus (Rev. 5-7; Rev. 12-14; Rev. 15:3; Rev. 17:14; Rev. 19:7, 9; Rev. 21-22).
 - As it had been slain = simile, referring to the crucifixion.
 - Four living creatures (Rev. 4:4-6) = metaphor, referring to the whole of the living creation.
 - Seven = metaphor (symbolic number), referring to fullness.
 - Horns = metaphor, referring to royal power.
 - Eyes = metaphor, referring to knowledge and oversight.
- **“from every tribe and language and people and nation.”** This is an example of a fourfold **merism**. John could have given a summary: people from everywhere.
- **“to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”** (Rev. 5:12). This is an example of a fourfold (power – strength) and of a threefold tautology (honor – praise). There are seven (fullness) words indicating that the Lamb receives full glory.
- **“in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea”** (Rev. 5:13) is again an example of **merism**. The creation is divided in its four parts. This division will recur in Revelation 8:6-12 and 16:2-9.

Theological notes

- ❖ The Book of Revelation is Trinitarian (God – Holy Spirit – Jesus Christ; Rev. 1:4-5) in character.
 - God is the first and the last (Rev. 1:8) – Jesus Christ is the first and the last (Rev. 1:17).
 - Jesus Christ speaks to the churches (Rev. 2:1-6) and the churches are summoned to listen to what the Spirit (Rev. 2:7) says.
 - Note the Trinitarian character of Rev. 5:
 - God, Creator residing on his throne

- The Son, the Lamb, standing in the midst
 - The seven spirits, sent by the Son to the corners of the earth (East, West, North, South), who is identical with the holy Spirit of God.
- ❖ The Book of Revelation is foremost a liturgical book with prayers, doxologies, confessions, prophecies and visions. It shows the heavenly liturgy in images and this liturgy affects the history of this world, when the plagues of God strike this earth. Rev. 4:11 explains why: **“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”**
- This is the first priority in the life of every human being: to glorify God.
 - This liturgical book reminds us of the liturgy in the tabernacle (especially) and the temple of the Old Testament. This explains the many references to the altars and the priestly appearances of Christ and some of his angels.
 - Revelation 5 contains three songs of glorification and one acclamation “Amen”.
- ❖ The book of Revelation is also a prophetic book about the past, the present and the future. It sheds light on the past, the present situation of the seven churches in Asia Minor, and the future, culminating in the promise of the new heaven and the new earth.
- From chapter 4 onwards the judgment of God is the dominating theme. He will do justice (Rev. 4-5; Rev. 6:10; Rev. 21:1-15 and other passages).

Technical and hermeneutical notes

- ❖ Reading and understanding the Book of Revelation requires:
- Profound knowledge of the Old Testament.
 - Especially the books of Exodus and Numbers, Ezekiel and Daniel are important for study. These books are related to oppression and deliverance of the people of God (Egypt and Babylon).
 - Knowledge of the Greek-Roman world of the first century.
 - Knowledge of figures of speech, because of all the metaphors and other figures of speech.
 - Knowledge of the structure of Revelation (see above).
 - (Elementary) knowledge of Hermeneutics.
- ❖ John received this Revelation from Jesus Christ and at the same time this Revelation reveals the risen and exalted Christ, who holds the keys of (life and) death and Hades (Rev. 1:17). John understood the words he heard, the visions he saw, though sometimes they needed to be explained to him (Rev. 1:19-20).
- ❖ John wrote down what he heard and saw in this book and sent it to the seven churches in Asia Minor, an important province of the eastern part of the Roman Empire. In these seven messages to the churches of Asia, Jesus Christ addresses major aspects of church life. He praises and

rebukes them and gives them promises of the life to come. Christians, members of these churches, understood these messages. Twice are people mentioned by name and they were warned against a movement called the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:6; 2:15), active among the churches. These Christians were far more familiar with the figures of speech used in the Revelation than we are nowadays.

- Figures of speech are not always easy understood by 21st century readers. Sometimes they are explained, more often not. Figures of speech allow more than one explanation and application. That explains the multitude of commentaries and theories.
- In the process of explaining and applying the prophecies of this book, the interpreter should ask himself two questions:
 - To which exegetical tradition do I belong? There is a plethora of traditions, especially in the Anglo-American World. To mention only three:
 - Amillennialism;
 - Postmillennialism;
 - Premillennialism.
 - Secondly, the interpreter should be aware of his own situation and of the local Christian community. What is my own political-religious situation and how does this situation affect my reading and understanding of the Book of Revelation?

Exposition

Verse 9-10

- ❖ **“And they sang a new song.”** The crucified and resurrected Christ, standing in the midst of the courtroom in heaven, is glorified by:
 - The representatives creatures of creation (Rev. 4).
 - The twenty-four elders, representatives of the heavenly court of justice (Rev. 4).⁴ These elders present the prayers of the saints to the glorified Christ and to the Lord God. These prayers are a cry for justice, because of the persecution that is taking place. (See also Revelation 8:3-4.)
 - The new song refers to Psalm 96 and 98. Note especially the following verses:⁵
 - Psalm 96:
“Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among

⁴ A detailed explanation is not given here.

⁵ The whole Psalm (96 and 98) should be taken into account.

the nations, his marvellous deeds among all peoples” (Vs. 1-3).

.....

“they will sing before the LORD, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. **He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth.**” (Vs. 13).

- Psalm 98:

“**Sing to the LORD a new song**, for he has done marvellous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. **The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations.**” (Vs. 1-2).

.....

“let them sing before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. **He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity**” (Vs. 9).

- ❖ “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals,”

- “You are worthy” is explained below. First the question about the character and contents of the scroll needs to be answered.
 - It is a scroll and not a codex or a book. A book can be opened at any page, a scroll only at the beginning. Each part of a book can be sealed separately by a different seal. When a scroll is sealed by several (seven) seals, it can only be opened when the last seal has been broken. (Compare Rev. 5:5.)
 - Given the setting of the judicial court in heaven, the contents of the scroll is probably dealing with judicial matters.
 - Some commentators think that the little scroll of Revelation 10 and this scroll are identical. This is not very likely. No one in heaven and on earth was worthy to break the seals and open the scroll. John gets the command to take and to eat the little scroll. This refers to Ezekiel 3:3, where the prophet receives his prophetic instruction. But if John wasn’t worthy to open the scroll, would he be worthy to eat it?
 - Other commentators think that from Revelation 6, when the first seal is broken, the contents of the scroll will be revealed gradually. This solution is not possible either, because of the above-mentioned reason, that the scroll can only be read after all the seals have been broken.
 - There is another moment in Revelation when books will be opened: Revelation 20:11-15. This is a judicial setting in a courtroom. There are several books, and one special one: **the book of life**. This book contains the names of the living ones purchased by the blood of Christ. Only Christ himself is worthy to open this scroll and look inside.
 - This explains the emotional reaction of John. He was weeping. When nobody could open this scroll, the names would be hidden for ever and ever.
 - The number seven indicates fullness.

- ❖ “You are worthy,” Two reasons are given:

- “because you were slain,”

- As a lamb (Isa. 53:7; Jno 1:29). See for more information: form and structure.
 - This is a reference to the crucifixion and the deliverance out of Egypt, where the people of God were oppressed by the Pharaoh and the Egyptians (compare Rev. 11:8).
 - **“and with your blood you purchased men for God”**
 - agoradzoo (= purchased) = **to secure the rights to someone by paying a price, buy, acquire as property**⁶. In this case the emphasis is not so much on the death of Christ as a sin-offering, but more on his acquisition of his people for God.
 - **“from every tribe and language and people and nation.”** Christians will come from the east and the west, the north and the south. For the use of this **merism**, see for more information: form and structure.
- ❖ **“You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God.”** This is an important designation. It connects Rev. 5:10 with Rev. 1:6, where the same idea is expressed. Peter uses the same words in his letter: 1 Peter 2:9. Both Revelation and 1 Peter 2:9 refer to Exodus 19:5-6:
 - **“Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”** (Ex. 19:5-6).
 - **“treasured possession”** (Ex. 19:5) <> **“purchased”** (Rev. 5:9).
 - **“the whole world is mine”** (Ex. 19:6) <> **“for you created all things”** (Rev. 4:11).
 - **“a kingdom of priests”** (Ex. 19:6) <> **“a kingdom and priests”** (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 1 Pet. 2:9).
 - **“to serve our God”** is sang by the four creatures representing the creation and the twenty-four elders.
 - Serving our God means living a godly life, following the Lamb (Rev. 14:4-5), living as the covenant people of God. They are the beloved children of God (Eph. 5:1-2). Listen to the words of the apostle Paul:
 - **“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”** (Rom. 12:1-2).
 - Serving our God means to live according to his good, pleasing and perfect will.
- ❖ **“and they will reign on the earth.”** This promise will be fulfilled when Revelation 21:9-22:6 has become reality (Rev. 22:5).

⁶ BAGD, p. 14

Application

- ❖ Caveat. While preaching on Revelation 5:9-10, the focus should not be too much on the details and all discussions among commentators. It is better to focus on the worthiness of the Christ, the LAMB of God. In doing so, it is important to show the connection between the Exodus of the Old Testament (Ex. 12; Ex. 19:5-6) and of the New Testament (Rev. 1:6; Rev. 5:9-10) and bringing them together in one grand picture of God's deliverance. There is one people of God purchased by the blood of the LAMB.
- ❖ The glorification of Christ is the most important theme of Revelation 5. In applying this song, the reference to Psalm 96 and 98 should be made clear.
 - These Psalms speak about God's justice and righteousness. This is important for all Christians, especially for those who live under oppression and are suffering because of persecution.
 - The glorification of Christ leads to worship. True worship, not only when we sing songs of worship, guides our thoughts, feelings, minds and lives towards the only who is worthy to open the scroll which contains all the names of the children of God.
 - The glorification of Christ needs to be applied to all aspects of life: personal life, the family life, business and politics, education and science. "Jesus is Lord." Christians are made a kingdom of priests, a covenant people. (See also Rom. 15:6, 9.)
 - This is an important aspect of pastoral care and guidance. The strong belief that Jesus is the Christ, the LAMB of God, comforts people who wrestle with feelings of guilt, struggle with sin, are suffering because of their faith. Christians should look less upon their unworthiness, but lift up their eyes and see the worthiness of the Christ. Their names are safe in his hands.
- ❖ The song ends with a glorious promise for all Christians. They will reign as kings and share the same glory with the Christ.

Bibliography

BAGD = Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bauckham, R. (1993). *The climax of prophecy studies on the book of Revelation*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark.

Beale, G. (1999). *The book of Revelation: A commentary on the Greek text*. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.

Garrow, A. (1997). *Revelation*. London: Routledge.

Hemer, C. (2001). *The letters to the seven churches of Asia in their local setting*. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.

Lausberg, H. (1998). *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric. A Foundation for Literary Study*. (Ed. D. F. Orton and R. D. Anderson). Leiden: Brill.

Osborne, G. (2002). *Revelation*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic.

Walvoord, J. (1966). *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: A commentary*. Chicago: Moody Press.