

CAPTURED BY HIS GLORY

Revelation 5:1-14

Please review this week's catechism question.

INTRODUCTION

Every human heart is captivated by the beauty and glory of someone or something. Each of our personal histories could be told by describing what have been those persons or goals or objects that our heart has been captured by from one moment to another. Describe a portion of the history of your life by reflecting on the various “glories” that have captured your heart.

According to 1 Corinthians 1:18 & 22-24 what is it that separates non-Christians from Christians? Compare 2 Corinthians 4:4 & 6.

Christians are distinguished by the fact that Jesus Christ, rather than appearing to them as foolish or offensive or unattractive is glorious. The Christian has discovered that Jesus is the most glorious of all beings because he is the power of God, the wisdom of God and the very glory of the Creator God.

Revelation 5 shows that all of heaven is captured by the glory of the lamb who was slain. It is Christ in all of his glory that makes heaven a holy and a happy place. God has recorded this vision of the joy that exists in heaven over the glory of Jesus Christ to help us in our quest to be increasingly captivated by his glory now. It will be our goal to seek to see the glory of Christ revealed here so that our hearts are more fascinated by his glory when we leave than it was when we arrived.

STUDY

1. According to Rev. 4:8-11 who is the one who sits on the throne with a scroll in his right hand?

He is the Lord God Almighty who has existed for all eternity and will continue to exist forever. He created all things and he is the one enables all things to continue to exist.

2. Read Esther 3:12-14 & 8:9-10. How does the vision that John has in Rev. 5:1 built on the practice of human kings as shown in Esther?

This picture is taken from the court of human kings. A king would write out his orders on a scroll, roll it up and then seal it with wax and put his ring in the wax as a mark that it was from him. It would be taken by courier to one his governors or to a general in the field or an ambassador. Only a person who had been duly appointed by the king had the right to open the scroll. If anyone else opened it he would be killed. The scroll contained the kings commands, his will for those to whom it was sent.

3. What does the scroll represent? Compare Ezekiel 2:1-3:11 and notice that this also occurs in the midst of a vision of God on his throne (Ezekiel 1:1). Notice what follows in the rest of both Revelation and Ezekiel.

The scroll is God's plan for establishing his kingdom in the universe. It is his decree as to how He is going to destroy all his enemies and save his people. It is “the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will” as Paul says in Eph. 1:11. This scroll is his plans and purposes for the universe he created. It is written on both sides to show that it is the full and complete statement of God's plan for planet earth. It is sealed with 7 seals to show that it is impossible for anyone, except for God's appointed agent, to open it and execute his orders.

4. According to vv. 3-4 what is the problem in heaven and how does John feel about the problem?

The problem is that there is no one who is worthy to open it and execute it. There is no created being in the universe that is worthy to open the scroll. God's kingdom cannot come to the earth until one who has earned the right to open the scroll and execute God's plan is found. A search is made throughout all of creation and no one is

found who has the right and the power to open it. In other words, God's will for the earth is not going to take place. God's kingdom is not going to come. God will not be shown to be a great and merciful God in the salvation of his people and a just and holy God in the destruction of evil. Don't miss this striking implication. Not even the Lord Almighty has the right to open the scroll. God the creator who has written out the scroll does not have the right to open it, that is, to execute his will on the earth. Now this stunning fact is more than John can take and he begins to weep and weep.

5. What are some of the possible reasons for why John weeps?

He weeps because he knows without someone to open and execute God's plan evil will never be destroyed. The righteous will continue to suffer. Creation will never be what God intended it to be. God's power and mercy and holiness will be forever mocked and maligned by Satan and sinful humanity and this is more than he can take and so he weeps. He longs for God and for God's kingdom to be fully established. He longs for not only himself but for all God's people to fully experience the presence of God. What John knows is that if no one is found who is worthy of opening the scroll then all is futility. John knows without someone who has established the legal authority to represent God on earth, there is no hope not only for himself but also for this miserable world. There is no point to suffering, there is no point to doing good, there is no point to love, there is no point to anything if someone is not found who can establish God's kingdom of justice and peace and love and holiness on this earth.

6. What kinds of things cause you to feel completely hopeless and thus provoke weeping in you? How does your sense of despair compare and contrast with John's?

We are captivated by the glory of Christ because there is no glory without Christ but only despair.

7. What are the three symbols or pictures of Jesus that are given in vv. 5-6? Where do they come from?

Jesus is described as "the Lion of the Tribe of Judah", "the Root of David and "the Lamb who was slain." All three of these pictures come from the OT: Gen 49:8-10, Isaiah 11:1-10 & hundreds of verses describing the sacrificing of lambs for the sins of the Israelites. See especially Exodus 12:5-7 & 12-13 and Isaiah 53:4-10.

8. Read Genesis 49:8-10. What do we find out about Christ by his being called the "Lion of the Tribe of Judah?"

The Messiah will be a descendant of Judah and all God's people will worship him. He is like a lion that is without equal in the animal kingdom. The lion hunts where he will and does not fear anyone or anything. We have in the picture of the lion the power of Christ to conquer all of his enemies. He cannot be resisted but will accomplish all that he intends. He is infinitely able to protect his people and to destroy his enemies. He has the power to fulfill God's plan for the universe.

9. Read Isaiah 11:1-10. What do we find out about Christ by his being called the "Root of David?" (NOTE: remember that Jesse is David's father.)

He is the king of Israel as he is the descendant of David. He is anointed with the Holy Spirit and will establish God's kingdom on the earth. The image itself points to a tree that has been cut down or in some other fashion destroyed but from which a shoot or a root sprouts out and grows into a tree to which all the nations will come. When Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, while he is a descendant of the great kings of Israel beginning with David, yet, when he is born there is no descendant of David reigning as king. The line of the kings of Israel descended from David lies in ruin. The Romans oppress the nation Israel. The tree is apparently dead and yet out of this defiled and destroyed line comes Christ upon whom the Holy Spirit rests and who destroys God's enemies with his mouth and establishes his kingdom of peace. It is a kingdom of peace where even bears and cows will feed together and children will not be harmed by vipers. It will be a kingdom that will encompass the whole world and all peoples. It will be a kingdom from which all the wicked will be destroyed.

10. What does the image of Christ as a lamb who was slaughtered but who is now alive tell us about him?

What John sees when he looks at the throne is not a lion or a king but a lamb with its throat slit. Thus John directs our attention to yet another image in the OT. It is the image of millions of lambs who have been sacrificed for the sins of the nation Israel through the millenniums, beginning with the thousands of Passover lambs slaughtered on that first Passover when God sent the angel of death into the land of Egypt to kill all the firstborn except those in homes sprinkled by the blood of the Passover lambs. John directs our attention to that great chapter in Isaiah 53 where the servant of the Lord is led to his death as a lamb to the slaughter. He dies for our transgressions. Thus in this short statement the various portraits and images of the glory of the Savior painted in the OT are brought together: The Savior who is lion and king and sacrificial lamb.

11. What are we to conclude about the one who is worthy to open the scroll based on these images from the OT? How does this help us to not weep over the misery of this world?

The one who is able to break the seals and open the scroll is the one whom God promised to send throughout the OT. The elder commands John and us to not weep. While we live in a world that appears to be out of control: where mad men walk into church services and murder their friends in a senseless act of violence, where millions of babies are legally butchered in their mothers wombs each year, where pastors and priests sexually molest children entrusted to their care, where fanatics fly airplanes into office buildings, where millions of children are orphaned by a disease that could be stopped if men and women would be faithful to monogamous heterosexual marriage—yet God is faithfully fulfilling all his promises. He has worked across the millennium to fulfill his plan to bring the Lion of Judah, the Root of David, the Lamb who was slain, into the world to fulfill his purposes. The coming of Christ into the world shows that the world is not out of control. The plan of God is moving forward and there is no reason to despair. God's kingdom will come and his will, will be done on earth as it is in heaven because what he promised he has done.

We are captivated by the glory of Christ because he is the promised Savior.

12. What are the ways that vv. 6-8 & 11-14 are similar to Rev. 5:4-11?

The Lord Almighty is seated on the throne and is surrounded by the living creatures and the four living creatures. These continually praise him saying that he is worthy to receive glory and honor and power for his creating and sustaining of all things. There are seven lamps before him that are the seven spirits of God. In the same way the lamb who was slain is in the center of the throne, surrounded by the 24 elders and the four living creatures. They along with all the hosts of heaven worship the lamb declaring that he is worthy to receive power and wealth and etc. The lamb is where only God can be and receives worship that only God is worthy to receive.

13. What other details are offered in vv. 6-8 that point to the deity of the lamb and the Trinitarian nature of God?

He has seven horns. A horn is the symbol of strength throughout the OT. To have seven horns is to have perfect strength, to be completely full of power. Here we have in symbol the omnipotence of God. He is equal in power to the Lord Almighty. The seven eyes are the seven spirits of God that are sent out into all the earth. This corresponds to the seven lamps in chapter four that are the seven spirits of God. These seven lamps and eyes represent the Holy Spirit who is sent out into the earth by the Father and the Son to accomplish all God's work among men. In this one verse we see a figurative and exalted vision of the Trinity. There is only one God because there is only one throne. Yet on this one throne there is the Lord Almighty, the creator God, who has a sovereign plan for all the earth. Then there is the lamb who was slain and who is now alive and is able to fulfill God's plan. Finally, there is the Holy Spirit who is sent out by the Father and the Son to fulfill what the Father planned and what the Son's victory gained. The identity of the lamb as the divine Son of God is confirmed by the response of the hosts of heaven to him. They fall down before him and worship him. The harps they hold point back to the dozens of

times in the psalms where God is praised with the harp. The new song they sing calls to mind the dozens of times God's people are exhorted to sing a new song to God. The bowls of incense, which are the prayers of the saints, point to the prayers of God's people offered to the great triune God. It would be blasphemy for the saints to offer prayer to anyone who is not God, for the angels to worship a fellow creature or to offer the prayers of the saints to a mere creature.

14. What do we discover about the relationship of the divine Son (the lamb who was slain) and the Father (the Lord God Almighty) in the fact that the Son is worthy to take the scroll from the Father's hand?

But also see the eternal humility and submission of the Son to the Father. He comes to his father, after accomplishing his work and takes the scroll from his hand. So the father honors the son by making him the judge and savior of the world and so the Son honors the Father by fulfilling the requirements necessary to establish his kingdom on the earth. The Father delegates the authority for saving and judging into the Son's hands because the Son has fulfilled perfect obedience and satisfied divine justice.

15. How does this vision of the Trinity affect you?

We are captivated by the glory of Christ because he is the second person of the Trinity.

16. According to vv. 5 & 9-10, why is the Lamb worthy to take the scroll and open its seals? What did he accomplish?

In v. 5 the elder says the one promised in the OT is worthy because he has triumphed. What does that mean? In vv. 9-10 we discover that he has earned this right by being slain and thus purchasing men for God. The power and authority of the lamb come from his death. It was in his weakest moment on earth that Christ accomplished his most powerful work.

He was slain and he purchased men for God. He made them a kingdom and priests for God. (The NIV inserts the verb "to serve". It is not in the text. It simply says he made them a kingdom and priests for God.) Jesus came to earth and died on a cross in order to purchase men for God. He offers the

church to God as a gift. His death satisfies God's justice and enables him to justly reward criminals like us with heaven. Again notice that Jesus does all the work. He came to earth to save a particular group of people out of all the different kinds of people that are on the earth. He purchased them and then he made them into a kingdom and priests and he will cause them to reign on the earth. Christ does all the work so that God receives all the credit, all the glory. Notice, we do gain much. We are God's kingdom, the people and place where he rules. We are priests to God. We live in his presence and gladly reflect back to him the radiance of his worth and we represent him here on earth. One day we will reign on this earth. But all these benefits are given to us, performed for us by Christ and he does it to bring honor to his Father.

17. According to vv. 11-14 who is impressed with what Jesus has done by his death? Why do you think they are so impressed? See Romans 8:19-22 and Revelation 21:1-5 & 2:1-5 (especially v. 3).

All the angels, the 24 elders, the four living creatures and every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea and all that is in them is astonished at the glory of Christ and can do nothing but worship him. They are so impressed because they know that by Christ's taking the scroll and opening its seals the entire creation will be restored to what God intended for it to be. The curse will be removed and God will dwell with holy men in a holy place forever.

18. How would you compare your level of astonishment and delight in Christ's being worthy to take the scroll with that shown by all the rest of creation? Is your heart captured by his glory? Why or why not? What are you doing about it?

We are captivated by the glory of Christ because Christ earned the right to execute God's plan by his death.