

December 11, 2011 by Steve Brandon



The Big Picture - Redemption

Matthew 1 - Revelation 5

We are in the middle of a four-part series entitled, "The Big Picture." In this series, we are trying to show how each of the pieces of the Bible fit into the whole.

I'm sure that all of you have at some point in your lives spent some time working on a jigsaw puzzle. And how did you go about putting it together? You take the box and dump the pieces out on the table. Then, you take the box and you flip it up on end, so that you can see the picture that you are working toward. With all of the pieces on the table, you spend a bunch of time flipping each one face up, so that you can see it.

Then, you find the edge pieces. You can find those easily, because one of their sides is straight. Then, you probably work to put these pieces together. You group similar-looking pieces together. They may be the blue sky or the green grass meadow or the lady's polka-dotted dress. Often times, you will pick up a piece and look at it and then look at the box in attempts to try to figure out where exactly that piece might go. Eventually, after some work, it all comes together.

That's what I want to help you with in this series. I want for you to have a Big Picture of the redemptive story-line of the Bible ever before you. So that when you reading a portion of the Scripture, you can pick it up and look at it and see how it fits into the Big Picture.

Now, our Big Picture has been a really "Big Picture." I've used four words to encompass the entire story of the Bible. Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration. God created a perfect world. But, we fell into sin. But, Christ came to redeem us. One day, He will restore all things to a better state than ever before. This is the story of your life as well. God has created you for His glory. But, you have fallen short of His glory in your sin. Christ has come to redeem you from your sin. So that, one day, you will be with Him in glory.

Now, surely, there are some limitations to such a "Big Picture." With only four words, there is much detail left out. And I'm not in any way saying that everything in the Bible fits into these four parts. There's no mention of the people of Israel or the church. There's no mention of the giving of the law or the role of the priests or the sacrificial system. There's no geography. There's no mention of the prophets or of the kings. It almost gives the sense that before the coming of the redemption, there is no hope or that there is no joy until the restoration.

These four words only trace one course of history--that of God's people. It is silent regarding those who rebel against the Lord and the hell in which they will spend eternity. There's no place given to wisdom literature or the personal experience of the saints. But, at least it gives you a fighting shot of the redemption storyline of the Bible. And that's what I want for you to have.

My message this morning is looking at the third word, "Redemption." Today, we hear the story of Jesus. God created the world, and it was very good (Gen. 1:31). But, we messed it up (Gen. 3:1-7). Very quickly, God promised that a redeemer would come and clean up the mess. His name is Jesus.

My text again this morning is broad. Last week, I took almost the entire Old Testament, some 800 pages in my Bible. Today, I'm taking almost the entire New Testament, some 230 pages in my Bible. So, we're going to miss a lot. But, my aim is to do what Philip did with the Ethiopian Eunuch. "He preached Jesus to him" (Acts 8:35). That's what I'm seeking to do this morning. I want to preach Jesus to you, because He is the one who brought redemption to the world!

And I want to begin right at the beginning of the New Testament. So, let's look at the beginning of the New Testament: the book of Matthew, chapter 1. Again, like last week, I want to spend some focused time in the early part of Matthew. And then, we'll pick up some speed touching down in Mark and Luke and Acts and a few epistles, and finally ending in the book of Revelation. So, as we go, we will only turn forward as we work through 230 pages of Biblical text.

Now, when you get to Matthew, chapter 1, you will see that it begins with a genealogy. Look at verse 1, "The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Right there in verse 1, we have an outline of the genealogy. Verse 2 begins with Abraham, the father of Isaac, the father of Jacob, the father of Judah. The line continues right on down until verse 6, where we read of Jesse, the father of David the king. This takes us down through the kings of Judah until the time of the deportation to Babylon (as mentioned in verse 11). The genealogy continues until we get to Jesus in verse 16, "Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah."

Now, the effect of this is that we are brought right back into the flow of the Old Testament. The New Testament isn't a document that stands on its own. It stands upon the foundation of the Old Testament. And right here at the beginning of the New Testament, we see Jesus, the Messiah, coming on the scene.

Jesus has been the anticipation of the Old Testament ever since the fall. I tried to bring that out in my message last week. Yes, God created a perfect world. But, Adam's sin brought the world into trouble. We see that something is dreadfully wrong with this world. Throughout the history of the Old Testament, we continue to see people walk down the same path of Adam into rebellion against the Lord. Whether that's the

priests, who messed up, like Nadab and Abihu who offered strange incense on the altar; whether it's the judges, like Eli's sons; whether it's like many of the kings, Jeroboam or Manasseh; whether it's like the multiple generations of the people of Israel -- people have walked in rebellion against the Lord. There is disharmony between God and His creation.

We know that we need someone to fix the world and restore the harmony. He is often called, "The Messiah" - The anointed one, who comes to save. And that's exactly what we have here. Here, in Matthew, chapter 1, we have "the record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah." And then, we go right into the story of Christmas, in which the story of the birth of Jesus Christ is told, ...

Matthew 1:18-21

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

There it is! This is the whole purpose why Jesus came to earth. He came as the Messiah, "to save His people from their sins." In other words, Jesus came to rescue His people from the damaging effects of the fall. He is the one who came to fix everything! This is in line with the anticipation of the entire Old Testament. Look at verse 22,

Matthew 1:22-23

Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us."

It was promised long ago that God would come and dwell with us. It was promised long ago that God would come and rescue us from our peril. And that's why Jesus has come. God has come to earth to save us from our sins.

This is the theme of Christmas. The Christmas carols are everywhere you go. Some of them focus on the mythology surrounding our Christmas traditions (Rudolph and Frosty and Santa Claus). Many of them focus upon the birth of our King, born in Bethlehem. But, there are some Christmas carols that mention the purpose of Jesus coming. And in so doing, they place Jesus into the "Big Picture" of the Bible's storyline. They speak of the theme of Jesus coming to save us and redeem us and deliver us and rescue us from the fall and the curses that came with it!

I know that you are familiar with the words, ...

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus, Born to set Thy people free.
Born Thy people to deliver.

O come, O come, Emmanuel And ransom captive Israel.

(O Little Town of Bethlehem)
O holy child of Bethlehem, Descend on us we pray.
Cast out our sin, and enter in; Be born in us today.

(Go Tell It on the Mountain)
Down in a lowly manger The humble Christ was born
And brought us God's salvation that blessed Christmas morn.

(How Great Our Joy!)
There shall the Child lie in a stall, This Child who shall redeem us all.

(Joy to the World)
No more let sin and sorrow grow, Nor thorns infest the ground.
He comes to make His blessing flow Far as the curse is found.

Good Christian Men, Rejoice With heart and soul and voice!
Now ye need not fear the grave: Peace! Peace!
Jesus Christ was born to save!

Silent Night! Holy Night, Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face, With the dawn of redeeming grace.

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, "Glory to the newborn King;"
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!

...

Mild He lays His glory by, Born that men no more may die.

O Holy Night, the stars are brightly shining;
It is the night of the dear Savior's birth!

Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope, the weary soul rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.

So, think of these songs this Christmas season, and rejoice as they mention "The Big Picture" of the purpose behind the coming of Jesus. Jesus was the anticipated one who was coming to save us from our sins and reverse the curse of the fall. It was what the entire Old Testament was anticipating.

The manner of His birth (as of a virgin) is pointed out in verse 23. The place of His birth (in Bethlehem) is pointed out in chapter 2. In fact, this is the first of various prophecies that are fulfilled in Jesus. Look at the beginning of Matthew 2, ...

Matthew 2:1-6

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah, for out of you shall come forth a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

Micah 5, verse 2 had prophesied that the messiah would be born in Bethlehem, and sure enough, it came to pass. When Mary, Joseph, and Jesus fled for their lives to Egypt, it was just like the prophets had foretold. Matthew 2:15, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." This was prophesied in Hosea 11:1. The mere fact that Jesus grew up in Nazareth, north of Israel, was according to plan as well. The prophets had said, "He shall be called a Nazarene" (Matt. 2:23).

But, nowhere does the anticipation of the Messiah come through more clearly than it does in the case of John the Baptist. He was the prophesied forerunner to the Messiah. Several times in the Old Testament, the prophets had said that a forerunner would come before the Messiah to prepare the way (Isaiah 40; Malachi 3). Look over at Matthew, chapter 3.

Matthew 3:1-3

Now in those days John the Baptist *came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make ready the way of the LORD, make his paths straight!'"

John the Baptist -- He was the one to point to Jesus and identify Him as the Messiah, who would come to redeem Israel. He is the one who pointed to Jesus saying, "Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

And with all of these references in Matthew 1, 2, and 3, we see that Jesus didn't merely come out of nowhere and die for our sins. Rather, Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. He was the One whom the entire Old Testament anticipated to solve the problem of the fall. He was the prophet that Moses spoke about (Deut. 18:15-19). He was the priest that Mechizedek foreshadowed (Genesis 14; Psalm 110). He was the king who was to sit on the throne of David forever (2 Sam. 7:13).

This whole point is the point of my sermon series. Jesus came in the flow of redemptive history. You need to know the story to know how Jesus fit in.

Now, when Jesus lived, He lived a perfect life. A good summary comes in chapter 4, verse 23, "Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people" (Matt. 4:23). Here you see the two-fold division of His ministry. Jesus was a teacher, proclaiming the way of the kingdom of God. And, Jesus was a healer, healing all who were sick, turning away nobody (unlike the faith-healers of today, who turn many away).

We are blessed to have some of His sermons recorded for us. Like in Matthew 5-7, which is known as "The Sermon on the Mount," in which he exposes the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and points the way to true righteousness. We are blessed to have some of the details of some of His miracles. In Matthew 8 and 9, we get a picture of the healing ministry of Jesus. He cleanses a leper (8:1-4) and heals the centurion's servant (8:5-13) and removes the fever from Peter's mother-in-law (8:14-15).

Throughout the gospel accounts, you see these things from Jesus. He teaches and He heals the sick. But, the point of the life of Jesus isn't so much about His life as it is His death.

Let's consider Mark, chapter 8. This chapter tells us of the turning point in the life of Christ. It's when He told His disciples for the first time that His life wasn't going to end well. He and His disciples had taken a bit of a retreat to the north country to get away from the crowds. And in verse 27, we read, ...

Mark 8:27-30

Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, "Who do people say that I am?" They told Him, saying, "John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets." And He continued by questioning them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter *answered and *said to Him, "You are the Christ." And He warned them to tell no one about Him.

At this point, Peter proclaims the true identity of Jesus. He was, indeed, the Messiah, who would come and redeem Israel! But, rather than coming as the political redeemer to overthrow the Romans (as they thought), the plans of Jesus were a bit different. He was to be the redeemer along the lines of Isaiah 53 -- the suffering servant who would bear our griefs and our sorrows (Is. 53:4), who would be pierced through for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities (Is. 53:5), who would be the guilt offering for our sin (Is. 53:10). And through His death, He would establish His kingdom, and restore all things to their rightful place. This is why we read ...

Mark 8:31-33

And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And He was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and *said, "Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

Although his eyes were opened a bit, Peter's mind was still not clear what it meant that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. He wasn't going to come and rule and reign and overthrow Caesar with a large military push. Instead, His plans were a bit different. He was going to Jerusalem to be killed there. But, after His death, He would rise again, which would dawn the new age of redemption.

And the way that Jesus was going to save His people was by dying. His death would redeem our lives, that we might live. He makes this clear a few chapters later. Turn over to Mark, chapter 10. James and John, two of His disciples, were seeking greatness in the kingdom of heaven. But, Jesus discerned that they didn't understand what they were asking for. Look at verse 42, ...

Mark 10:42-44

Calling them to Himself, Jesus *said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all."

And then comes the key statement, ...

Mark 10:45

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Verse 45 is a sort of mission statement for the life of Jesus. Jesus didn't come to be served. Rather, Jesus came to serve. And He came to serve by giving His life in death. And by dying, He would purchase our lives. We were held captive because of our sin. But, His life became the ransom price to redeem us. And now, we go free.

Jesus took the true path to greatness, not by looking out for His own interests and lording it over others, but rather by looking out for our interests and giving Himself for us! And that's exactly what happened upon the cross. Let's gaze a bit at the cross.

In Mark 15, we find Jesus upon the cross.

Mark 15:33

When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour. At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"

This is the reality of what took place upon the cross of Christ. God was forsaking Jesus.

There may be particular times in your life when circumstances have taken a turn for their worst. And you may have felt that God has forsaken you. But, rest assured, that has never happened like it did for Jesus. For those of us who love Jesus Christ, we have the promise, "... that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28). Oh, it may look like God has left us. And, the reality may be that we are facing His disciplining hand for our sin. But, such discipline is always for our good. Or, it may be that He is pruning us for greater effectiveness (John 15:2). But, God has never forsaken us like He did Jesus upon the cross.

At that moment of time, God, the Father, was turning His face away from God, the Son. In reality, God was forsaking God! The Father was punishing the Son for our sin! Jesus was ransoming us. Jesus was redeeming us. Jesus was paying the punishment that our sin deserved. Thereby, reversing the curse inflicted upon us in the garden, granting us blessing instead of a curse, forgiving us of our sin, creating new hearts within us, adopting us to be His children.

That's the story of redemption. That's the story of Jesus. But the story is so wonderful that the disciples didn't really understand everything right away. A great picture of this comes in Luke 24 on the road to Emmaus. We pick up the story shortly after the resurrection. The disciples are confused and disappointed and downcast.

Luke 24:13-27

And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. While they were talking and

discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them. But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. And He said to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they stood still, looking sad. One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?" And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see." And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

Here you see the confusion and unbelief of the disciples. In their unbelief, they had a difficult time putting everything together. Yes, Jesus had told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up" (Matt. 20:18-19). In fact, both Matthew and Mark record three separate instances in which Jesus told these things to His disciples. Jesus may have told them even more than three times. But, as Jesus said, their hearts were slow to believe.

Their hopes were set upon a political deliverance from the Romans (verses 21). But, they didn't understand that the suffering of Christ was necessary for Him to enter into glory. In some regard, I believe that they were focused too narrowly on their own lives and their own plans, like James and John. They failed to catch the "Big Picture" of what Jesus accomplished on the cross.

And that's where Jesus took the Old Testament Scriptures and showed these disciples how they spoke of Him. Yes, the fall had ruined life on the planet. But, throughout the Old Testament, there are glimpses of hope, which would come through the Messiah. But, the hope was a bit different than they thought. The hope was bigger than they ever thought possible.

Jesus wasn't merely another judge to come along and deliver that generation of Israelites from the Roman tyranny, only to need another judge in the next generation as the people would rebel again like their forefathers. No, Jesus was the Savior of Israel. He would save them from their sins. But, He was the Savior of the Gentiles as well! Jesus is the redeemer for all who believe in Him! Such realities were a bigger picture than the disciples had in their mind. Their problem was that they were slow of heart to believe (24:25).

Now, before ascending to heaven, Jesus gave His final directions to the disciples: Preach and proclaim this message to all the nations. Look down at verse 44.

Luke 24:44-49

Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

With opened minds now (24:45), this is the very thing that the disciples did. They proclaimed "repentance for forgiveness of sins ... in Jesus' name." (24:46). Jesus -- the Messiah -- has come! Believe in Him! This is the message of redemption!

At first, these disciples started in Jerusalem, but as the message took hold, it spread to Judea and to Samaria and then to Antioch and Asia Minor and Philippi and Thessalonica and Berea and Athens and Corinth and beyond! Throughout the book of Acts, we see this message come again and again and again and again, as they carried this message to the world! Jesus is the Messiah! Believe in Him!

We could easily spend the rest of our time this morning looking at the wonderful evangelistic message that comes in the book of Acts. Evangelistic messages fill up the majority of Acts, 2, 3, 7, 10, 13, 14, and 17. Most of them have the same sort of feel: Jesus is the promised Messiah, who had died for our sins and was truly raised from the dead, thereby conquering death. So, repent from your sins and believe in Him.

For the sake of time, let's just look at one such message. Acts, chapter 10. This is when the good news of Jesus, the Messiah, first comes to the Gentiles.

Acts 10:34-43

"I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him. The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)— you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.

And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."

There it is. Jesus was the Messiah, which literally means "the anointed one" (10:38). He healed the sick. He healed those oppressed by the devil. But, He was killed upon the cross in Jerusalem. But, the story doesn't end there. He was raised from the dead! And "everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins" (10:43).

This message is typical of the apostles. This is the gospel! This is what sets us free! That's why Paul always held the gospel up as primary importance.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

This is the message of redemption which has come through Jesus. Look at the book of Ephesians. Chapter 1, verse 7.

Ephesians 1:7

In [Jesus] we have redemption through His blood, [that is] the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.

The story of redemption is the story of forgiveness of sins at the cross of Christ. You can easily argue that this is the predominant theme in the New Testament. There is forgiveness in Jesus Christ. There was no reason why God had to send His Son to be our Savior. He could have let the world crumble by itself. But, by His grace (Eph. 1:7), He decreed that He would save us from our sins (Matt. 1:21), by sending His Son to redeem us from our sins. It's said in many different ways, using many different words, but the thrust is still the same: God has redeemed us!

2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "[God] made [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Romans 8:1 promises, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

Galatians 3:13 says, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us--for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'".

Colossians 2:13 tells us, "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions."

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 says, "They themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come."

1 Timothy 2:5-6 says, "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time."

Titus 2:14 says, "[Christ Jesus] gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds."

Hebrews 10:10 tells us, "By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

1 John 1:9 promises, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

I promised that we would finish our time this morning in the book of Revelation, so let's turn there. First of all, let's consider the following passage:

Revelation 1:4-6

Grace to you and peace, ... from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood.

Jesus has released us from our sin. Our sin had bound us in shackles. But in Jesus, we are free. Our sin no longer finds us. We are released from our sins!

Then, we'll look at one further passage.

Revelation 5:1-10

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. 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. Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; 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. And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying,

"Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

"You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

The Father has a book in His hand. Nobody had the credentials to open this book. But, along comes the Lion of Judah, who appears as a slain and bloodied Lamb. Then, the elders and the four living creatures all begin to worship this slain Lamb, who is none other than the king, Jesus! They give their reason for worship--He was able to open up this book, where no other creature in the entire universe was worthy.

And why was Jesus able to take the book? "because you were slain." The death of Jesus provided Him with the authority. Furthermore, Jesus "purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9). This is redemption language. There was a transaction that took place. Jesus purchased men for God. The fact that Jesus purchased them from every tribe and tongue means that he purchased an ethnically diverse heaven.

Note how the crucifixion is front and center in all of this worship. The crucifixion was the means through which Jesus purchased those in heaven. Note how central Jesus is in the end. It's all about Jesus and the work He did on the earth, which carries long into eternity.

So, believe on Him!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on December 11, 2011 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.
