

The Excellency of Christ (*HT – Jonathan Edwards*) – Rev 5:5-6

Introduction – Isaiah prophesies to Jerusalem that she must say to the cities of Judah, “Behold your God!” (Isaiah 40:9). When Jesus Christ is preached, Paul instructs us that the light of the glory of God in Christ is revealed (2 Cor 4:5-6). But what does this mean and how are we to access this glory, this light, and behold God? And why? What good is it for us; of what benefit? In August of 1736, Jonathan Edwards preached a sermon entitled, “*The Excellency of Christ*,” where his theme was, “*There is an admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies in Jesus Christ*.” Today, as in Edward’s day, we need to behold Christ in all of His Divine graces, a beautiful combination of surprisingly varied glories. The Son of God, our Savior, is both the Lion of Judah and the Lamb of God, and this image exemplifies the diverse excellencies of Christ.

The Lion and the Lamb (Rev 5:5-6) – Who is this that is worthy to open the scroll (of the New Covenant)? He is *the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David*, for He comes from that line, whose banner was a lion foretold that “*the scepter will not depart from Judah*” (Gen 49:9-10). David’s Son had come and conquered and reigned like a lion as King. But He is also the Lamb who was slain, not only a symbol of meekness and submission, but primarily in this passage the suitable Sacrifice to God, the required mediatorial atonement.

Infinite Highness and Infinite Condescension – Christ is King of kings, but consider how infinite the chasm. He is the Creator and Possessor of heaven and earth. He is sovereign Lord of all, ruling the whole universe. His knowledge is without bound, and His throne is forever and ever (Heb 1:8). Yet His condescension is sufficient to take notice of those who are the lowest rank or degree (James 2:5) and the vilest offenders of His law (1 Cor 6:9-11).

Infinite Justice and Infinite Grace – He is the perfect, just Judge, hating sin and refusing to clear the guilty (Num 14:18) but even there we read of His abundant grace. In Christ, mercy and truth are met together (Psalm 85:10).

In the God-Man Jesus Christ – we discover these diverse excellencies, which would normally be considered to be incompatible.

Infinite Majesty and Transcendent Meekness – Christ, the majestic Lion, is spoken of in Psalm 45:3, “*Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One, with Your glory and Your majesty*.” He is mightier than the noise of many waters, His triumph over His enemies is sure, making of them a footstool for His feet, punishing with everlasting destruction. Yet He comes riding “*lowly, and sitting on a donkey*” (Matt 21:5), He was reviled and reviled not in return (1 Pet 2:23), praying for those who condemned and crucified Him.

The Deepest Reverence towards God and Equality with God – We read of Christ kneeling down and praying to His Father (Luke 22:41), and yet, at the same time He was in all respects equal to the person of the Father (Phil 2:6, John 10:30). These things meet in no other person but Jesus Christ.

The Highest Value of Good and the Greatest Patience under sufferings – Ethically, Jesus was the perfect good man. He kept the law and loved His God and His fellow man. This left Him worthy of the love of the Father and eternal happiness. Yet, His obedience included perfect patience under the greatest sufferings that were ever endured in this world (Heb 12:2), and that without any personal cause of His own. He suffered from God for our sins; He suffered under men for their sins when He was infinitely worthy of their love and honor. This made His patience all the more glorious (1 Pet 2:20-24).

Supreme Dominion over Creation and Perfect Resignation to Obedience – His dominion is complete and supreme (Col 1:15-17) in His own right and not by delegation. And yet this Son obeyed His Father’s commands, even when they cost Him great suffering up to and including His life (John 10:18, 14:31, 15:10, Phil 2:8).

Self-Sufficiency and Entire Trust upon God – Being God, Christ is self-sufficient, standing in need of nothing. But Christ entirely trusted in His Father for His deliverance (Matt 27:43, 1 Pet 2:23).

The Expression of these Diversities in the Actions of Christ – His actions reveal Who He is and the diversity of His glories. The Word becomes flesh and dwells among men. Not only so, He is brought into the world, conceived in the womb of a virgin, born in a stable to a poor family, and all the while the angels are singing of His divine majesty and glory in His Person and in what He would soon do (Luke 2:10-14). In His public ministry, He was poor and had no place to lay His head, depending upon the support of His followers. He bore the reproach of the scribes and Pharisees while displaying His glory in His miraculous works and in these works declared His Lordship over every created thing. And of course, offering up Himself as a sacrifice for sinners, not only does He show forth His meekness, not only is He the slain Lamb, but He also shows forth His glorious victory over the Devil and those principalities (Col 2:14-15). The devil, like Jonah’s whale, swallowed up Christ, and yet found he must soon release Him from the dead. There, He bound the strongman and looted his home.

Why Does this Matter? – We are told to “behold your God!” through the Word by faith and these diverse excellencies are manifest all over – this is what we are to behold. What does it cause and how does it benefit us?

Close with Christ – His fullness and all-sufficiency as Savior, in all which that title means, gloriously appears in the variety of excellencies. As He is lifted up, we are told that He will draw all men to Himself (John 12:31-32). Are you afraid He cannot save you? What desire could you have in a Savior that is not in Christ? He is the Lamb of God and the Lion of Judah.

The Call to Friendship with Christ – Consider: One of infinite honor and majesty offers Himself to you in the nearest and dearest friendship.

The Way to the Father – But it does not end there. United to Christ, we have a more glorious union with and enjoyment of God the Father than otherwise could be (Gal 4:4-6, John 17:21-23).

Behold, your God! And welcome to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dave Hatcher – May 29, 2011

Little Saints Notes

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Jesus is named as two different animals in Revelation 5:5-6. Read that passage and name the two animals –

1.

2.

What do we know about Lambs? How were they used in sacrificial worship?

What do we know about Lions? How do they display majesty, strength, and kingship?

What does it mean to you that the King of kings – of all the kings of the world – King Jesus – wants to be your friend and provides a way for you to come to His Father? Read John 17:21-23