

Blinded Minds

Refusing To Believe the Truth

Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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I had an enlightening and rather discouraging email exchange with a woman this week. It really illustrated a truth to me that we have heard many times over the years, but may not have fully grasped. The truth of which I am speaking is found in II Corinthians 4:4:

II Corinthians 4:4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

The woman who I was e-mailing back and forth with claimed to be a Bible teacher, which I assumed meant that she probably taught Sunday school at her local church. I do not think this gives her very much credibility, because most Sunday school teachers do not have a whole lot of training. But at least in her own mind she knew the Bible quite well. She felt that she really understood things. She also claimed to have studied the passage in question, which happens to be Revelation 4 and 5, quite deeply, which is why she knew I was wrong in my Berean comment on March 24 on the verses II Peter 1:19-21.

The gist of that comment is a principle of prophetic interpretation, and it posits that the Bible's symbols are consistent in their meanings and God does this so that we can have a pretty good understanding of what they mean and how to interpret them—how to understand them. For instance, we have said many times that yeast is a symbol of corruption and therefore of the corruption of sin. Or a field—Jesus Christ said this in Matthew 13 very plainly. He said a field is the world. Jewels—He also said this in Matthew 13—He interpreted as valued and prized possessions.

Now, I made the "mistake" of using as an example the symbol of a lion. You may have read the commentary, and maybe it is coming back to you. I thought it was clear that the Bible uses the lion as a symbol of a ruler, like Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 7:4, where he is shown to be the lion in that particular prophecy, but particularly a powerful, fierce and majestic ruler. I even said in that comment that we should not try to define these symbols so narrowly, like as just one person or one thing, meaning that we should not limit the symbol to a particular ruler. We could say that the lion is only Nebuchadnezzar, and every time a lion shows up in the Bible, it means Nebuchadnezzar. No, that's too narrow a way to look at it. Nebuchadnezzar fits it because he was a powerful, majestic

and very fierce ruler.

So we have to let the context determine just who the particular person is that the lion represents in the prophecy. I mentioned that in one place (I Peter 5:8) that Satan is represented as a lion who is seeking to devour us. In Revelation 5:5, on the other hand, Jesus Christ is called "the Lion the tribe of Judah, the root of David, who has prevailed to open the scroll and loose the seven seals." It seems very obvious. We would all say, "Of course that's Jesus Christ. Who else is the Lion of the tribe of Judah?"

It is this point that she vehemently protested. She said, "the lion represents Satan, not Christ!"—very emphatic. "It *cannot* symbolize Christ because Revelation 5 pictures Christ as a lamb, not a lion." At this point I did the email version of a double-take. I said, "What? How can the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, not refer to Jesus Christ?" Her response just absolutely floored me. She said that in Revelation 4, one of the four living creatures is a lion—the lion who prevailed to open the scroll is that particular one of the four living creatures. Further, she said, "prevailed" means "attempted," so [H]e attempted to open the scroll but [H]e failed because only the Lamb, Christ, could open it.

At this point I was going . . . I literally clutched my head in frustration when I got the return email. Nowhere in scripture is the lion-like one of the four living creatures even remotely connected with Judah or David, or have the authority, or even was presented with the opportunity to open the scroll. No dictionary ever, in the history of the English language, has ever defined "prevail" as "to attempt." I do not know where she got that. It means "to gain ascendancy through strength or superiority; to triumph; to be effective; to persuade; to predominate; to persist," but never ever "to attempt."

Revelation 5:5 says very plainly in both Greek and in English that "the Lion of the tribe of Judah has *triumphed* to open the scroll (even though it uses the word "prevailed") because if anybody knows what the word "prevailed" means. It means to triumph—to overcome.

By the way, the Greek word underlying "prevailed" is Strong's #3528, *nikao*, meaning "to conquer; overcome; prevail; get the victory." This is the same word from which the Greek goddess Nike—the little swoosh on your tennis shoes—who is a personification of victory, gets her name. *Nikao*, Nike. Far from "attempting something," this word denotes achieving a glorious goal through great struggle. That's exactly what Jesus did in His sinless life and His death on the cross to redeem us from sin. He achieved a great victory in that.

So, I told her this, of course, but she was not convinced still. Not at all. "Why would Jesus Christ," she said, "be called a lion, where everywhere else (in the book of Revelation, she meant) He is called a lamb?" It's a fair question. He is only called a lion I believe one time in the book of Revelation, and many times as a lamb. So, she reiterated: "*Satan* is the lion, Jesus Christ is the lamb, and it is the Lamb who is worthy, not the lion." She went on to say that her church *never* teaches Christ is a lion, only that He is a lamb. And she went on to assure me that I was wrong.

How do you respond to someone who is fully persuaded that she is right, when the clear words of Scripture virtually scream that she is wrong, and even the dictionary tells her she's wrong? At this point, I knew I could not convince her that she was in error. It just was not going to happen. But I changed my tactics a little bit, and I warned her that she was purposely ignoring a vital facet of the character of Jesus Christ—that He may be a lamb, yes, in some respects, but by calling Him "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," the Bible is teaching us that He is a powerful, majestic, and sometimes stern and violent King of kings who will rule with a rod of iron. He will decisively defeat His enemies and avenge injustice done to His people

She had no counterargument for that, because she did not believe it. She just went on, in her email back to me, that I was wrong. I was not reading the scripture correctly and I was teaching error and leading people astray. So, I finally said, *I am not going to reply anymore; she's convinced, and we are just going to end up shouting at each other, so the best thing to do would be just to stop responding.*

But there is no reasoning with some people. You cannot assume, as I foolishly did, that she would understand what I thought was obvious. Who else in the Bible is the lion of the tribe of Judah? David could certainly be thought of that in his time and limited capacity, but certainly in the book of Revelation, "the lion of the tribe of Judah" can only be Jesus Christ. Thinking about it, I realized that she has been so conditioned to think of "Jesus, meek and mild" that she cannot now even contemplate a Jesus who becomes angry, who executes violent justice on His enemies, and who rules without compromising His standards.

So as II Corinthians 4:4 says, the God of this world has deceived millions of so-called Christians to worship a weak, false Christ—a helpless little baby, or a dead Man on a cross—and not the glorious sovereign God who will come with almighty power and wrath to put Satan and his followers down.