

## The Lamb, Who Alone Is Worthy

**Revelation 5** — Part Two: Revelation 5:8b–14

Today we reach the pinnacle of this throne room worship service in heaven, and look forward to the day it will also be on earth. In Revelation 4 we see God, the **Creator and Sustainer** seated on the throne of his creation, praised and adored by his creation for all that he has done in creation. In chapter 5 God is praised as the **Redeemer and Savior** of his creation. So, his mighty deeds in creation and his mighty mercy in salvation make him worthy to execute the plan of God for the conclusion of human history. That is what we believe is perfected planned and recorded in the scroll. Today we see the *teleios*, or the perfect outcome of the conquering Lamb's perfect work in redemption. That *teleios* is our unrestrained, uninterrupted passionate love and submission to King Jesus.

Summarizing those first 8 verses of chapter 5, we see John weeping because no one is found worthy — no one is morally perfect and pure to execute God's plan in restoration and judgment. Or so he thinks in the moment. Then one of the elders directs John's tear-blurred eyes to the Messiah, the Lamb of God, who is worthy to take and open the scroll and execute the restoration of His creation and judgment of those who remain in rebellion against the Lamb. The Lamb, alone, is worthy. The Lamb, alone, is able, and he undertakes to bring about all that is purposed. The Messiah takes the scroll; the 24 elders fall down and worship the worthy Lamb. When we see — I mean really see *and know* — who our God is, we will *worship* — truly worship — in spirit and truth.

Though I've summarized it, it is our memory passage, and we can't recite it too many times. So let's read the chapter and saturate our minds with God's word.

**Revelation 5** — Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. <sup>2</sup> And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" <sup>3</sup> And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, <sup>4</sup> and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. <sup>5</sup> And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

<sup>6</sup> And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent

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out into all the earth. <sup>7</sup> And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. <sup>8</sup> And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. <sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying,

“Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals,  
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God  
from every tribe and language and people and nation,

<sup>10</sup> and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

<sup>11</sup> Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, <sup>12</sup> saying with a loud voice,  
“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”

<sup>13</sup> And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” <sup>14</sup> And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

### PRAY —

Last Sunday we left with the elders on their face before the Lamb, but we just saw them fall down before the Lamb. Let’s quickly look at what they are holding in their hands that are part of worship.

**v. 8b** — ... each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. We won’t labor long here, because we are making some educated guesses about what these symbolize, but we can’t say with certainty. Harps were typically used as accompaniment instruments in the bible’s hymnbook, the Psalms. Since God’s word is fixed forever in the heavens, it is not a stretch to think this points to the ongoing use of the Psalms and scripture in worship. The golden bowls filled with the prayers of the saints represent the way God values and is pleased with your prayers. He does not despise them. He does not lose track of them. Prayers we may think are unanswered are not lost to God, nor do they have an expiration date. What is the nature of these prayers? We don’t know. One scholar posits that these prayers are those that echo and expand on the opening petitions of the model prayer that Jesus taught in Matthew 6: Hallowed by your name. Your kingdom come; your will be done. Whatever the nature of the prayers, we can take heart that our God both finds them pleasing and does not disregard them. These details give insight into

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worship, but they are not the main things in this passage. Let's move to the central truth in worship, about which a new song is sung:

**v. 9–10 — And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, <sup>10</sup> and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”**

Here is the focal point, not only of worship, but of all of creation, and all of history. The Lamb is worthy to take the scroll and carry out what is written there because

- He was slain — a historical fact
- He purchased people — what was accomplished by his death
- He made them a kingdom and priests — the consequence, or outcome of what he did; the *teleios*.

**Jesus was slain.** He paid the price of sin. The wages of sin is death. It is the price that is required of all sinners, and that's what we all are. *If that's the price that is required of us, how is that we can live with God and not die?* Very simply, he stepped in as a substitute. God did not disregard the wages your sin earned. His mercy did not overlook the penalty of your sin because his holiness requires the destruction of sin. No, for those who come to this Lamb in faith, turning from their sin to him, the full price of their sin was paid by this gentle lamb who paid the price of death. This is the doctrine of Penal Substitutionary Atonement. He was slain. He paid the death penalty in your place. As he died for sin, God the Father accepted the Son's payment — your sin carried away in the Savior's death — and he cancelled the record of sin debt you earned and accumulated.

And note the finality of the payment: He was slain. It is not going. There is no further sacrifice needed. Thus the Lord's final words from his atoning cross: It is finished. It is finished. Once done, forever accomplished. Ruined sinner, take heart. As you consider the massive burden of your offense and rebellion against God perhaps you have thought to yourself that stain is too deep to cleanse, the price too high for the Savior alone to bear. Perhaps some warped sense of pride would drive you to think you will undertake to improve yourself or make amends in some way for your sin. First, any effort on your part is hopelessly tainted by sin. You can pay for sin with sin-stained hands. Secondly, the Lamb was slain. It is a finished historical fact. The work of redemption is complete and the full payment has been accepted. Look away from yourself and false hope of improvement and trust him

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and his finished work. Cease futile efforts to improve Christ's work. Rest in him. Be cleansed by him. And submit your life to him. That's what his atoning work did: It purchased you.

**He purchased people for God.** This he accomplished in his sacrificial death. We were in Adam, under the curse of sin, owing the penalty of sin with no price in our hand to pay it. Death reigned, sin bound us, and we slavishly followed the prince of the power of the air. Rather than children of God, we were children of wrath, and citizens of the domain of darkness. That is the reality of every soul apart from Christ. But the Lamb, at price of his blood, purchased or ransomed us from the slavery to sin and the dominion of darkness. As **Colossians 1:13** says, we were delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of God's beloved Son. We are no longer slaves of sin, but slaves of righteousness. No longer following Satan, but following King Jesus. No longer living for self, but living for Jesus. Hence, **1 Corinthians 6:19b-20** — **You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.** Salvation is not about you. Salvation is God's work for God's purposes. We have silly men and false teachers who warp God's plan for salvation and make it man-centered — Your Best Life Now. **Your** best life? It's not your life at all. You were purchased from death. Seductive books and silly conferences misrepresent this central tenet of the faith: God saved us from himself for himself.

Who did he purchase? People from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. One can parse these into different affinities and distinctions, and there may be some value for us in the way we grasp the totality of God's mission. But it's that last part that is the main thing: God's redemptive plan is for the whole of humanity. Uighurs in western China. The Tadjakant in Algeria — who are today's unreached people group in the app's prayer guide. Animists in West Africa. White Europeans. Brown Hispanics. Palestinians in Israel. Buddhists in Central Asia. Republicans in Kansas. Tories in England. French. Germans. Russians, Chinese, Brazilians. All of these are those for whom Christ died, and all of these are represented around the throne. Why? He is worthy of worship from all he has created. As the lower orders of creation give God the glory and honor he is due, so the highest of the created order — those who have a voice and sing the song of the redeemed, will be present around the throne, and will all be trophies of grace, purchased by the Lamb. His mission is our mission. We give our lives to this. We give our children to this. We give our grandchildren. Parents, look at your children. Do you want them to love and serve God? Then embrace the fullness of God's mission and prepare them to be evangelists for his glory, to wherever the sun does its successive journey run.

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**He has made us a to be a kingdom and priests.** This, to me, is the most stunning aspect of what the conquering Lamb has done. It was promised in **Exodus 19:6** when the people gathered at Sinai — **you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.** The consequence, the outcome of his atoning death and purchase of people for God is the fulfillment of that promise, and a total and complete reversal of the catastrophic fall into sin. Adam was created as a priest. If that sounds strange to you, let's define terms. A priest is someone who is devoted to God, and orients the whole of their life to serve him. They live their lives near God. Before Christ came in his office of Priest, sacrificing himself, the priests enjoyed a nearness to God others did not have. Adam, created by God, lived in communion with God in the sanctuary of Eden, performing the work God assigned. As God's image bearer, he mediated the presence of God to the rest of creation. When Jesus makes us a Kingdom and priests, he is doing nothing less than restoring us to his original intent that we orient our lives to him, that we live in close communion with him, and that we serve him in meaningful ways in his kingdom. It is breathtaking to me, and stretching what I can get my mind around, to think that God took a rebellious sinner — one who raised his fist against God and his rule and reign... One who is deeply stained by sin, ruined by sin, and loving sin and self, and does such a total transformation as to make me — that's who I'm speaking of... and it is true for all of us — his work of redemption is so thorough as to clothe us in his righteousness so that we can serve a holy God, He conquers our rebellion and makes us citizens of his kingdom, and gives a new heart that we can love him rather rail against him. This is what the Lamb did. This is the center of worship. This is crux of history. And this is why Jesus Christ, alone, is worthy of worship. We will reign with him on a re-created earth. Eden, God's sanctuary of communion, is recovered. We will see more about that in the weeks ahead as we get to the new heaven and earth.

As this new song rehearsing the Lamb's mercy and grace and salvation is sung, the whole of heaven cannot remain silent and bursts into song declaring the beauty and worth of the Lamb. This is gravitational center of creation that was once under the corrupt and deadly curse of sin but has now been restored and recovered. As it is the gravitational center of all creation, of course it the gravitational center of worship. Week in, week out, we remind ourselves of the work of our Savior, our hopelessness and lostness apart from him, and his great work in restoring us to himself, for himself. We do it for our sakes, because we must be continually oriented to our purpose. We do it for the sake of those who remain in darkness in the prayerful hope that through the blood of the Lamb of the word of our testimony they will have eyes open to see and savor the beauty and grace of the Lord Jesus. But most importantly — of surpassing importance — we do it because Jesus Christ is worthy to

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receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing because he has wrought the restoration and redemption of all things. This song merits singing and rehearsing for eternity.

The phrase in v. 12, **to receive** power and wealth and wisdom and might, should not be read as though the Lamb were lacking these things. These attributes are already ascribed to Christ in other places in the scripture. Power and wisdom are ascribed to Christ in 1 Corinthians 1:24. Wealth is ascribed in 2 Corinthians 8:9 and Ephesians 3:8. Strength is noted in Luke 11:22. Honor, glory, blessing are those praises and expressions he is already receiving, and are expressions and responses we will continually offer through eternity.

*E'er since by faith I saw the stream Thy flowing wounds supply  
Redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be 'til I die!*

Not just 'til I die, but for all eternity.

His redemption is center point of history. The cross is the gravitational center around which everything rotates. Let's press in just a bit more before we move from this scene that shapes our lives as well as all of history. Every creature is now resounding with praise: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" <sup>14</sup> And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped. They worship.

This 2-chapter scene of the throne room ends with **teleios**, the fulfillment, the goal of God realized. The New Testament tells us God is seeking two things: The Son of man has come to seek and save that which was lost. (Luke 19:10) He seeks the lost. And then in John 4:23 — But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. He seeks worshipers in spirit and in truth. The former accomplishes the latter. He pursues and purchases the lost in order that they may be worshipers. That is the teleios, the end game. The final word in chapter 5 is the goal realized: worship. The elders fell down and worshiped.

There remains one important truth about worship to discover. What we have seen so far is that true worship centers on God and his mighty work in creation, and his mighty work in redemption. The cross of Christ is center stage. Worship involves expressing truth about God. We use our words, if you will. That means our intellect is involved. We think with our minds rightly about God as he has

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revealed himself, and we express those truths accurately with language. But it is possible to focus on God and to rightly express truth about God, yet never worship. Jesus condemns religious leaders by quoting **Isaiah 29:13** — ...this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me. He rejects their worship, not because they came to a false God — they had the right God — not because they aren't expressing truth about God — but because their hearts do not love God.

The Greek word **proskyneō** is one of a few words that come into English as **worship**. It is a tender term that literally means to kiss the hand, as an act of reverence and submission. Think of a loyal dog licking his master's hand. It is affectional — it captures both the love of the heart and submission of the will. It says, "I love you," and "I submit to you." To truly worship God is love him — which requires a new heart — and to submit to him. The elders' submission to Christ as King is displayed in their physical posture: The bow before this King. They submit their will to him.

If we are to worship this worthy King, we must submit our will to him. Any other worship is vain worship declaring with words that Jesus is worthy, but denying the words with the will.

**Romans 12:1–2** drives at the devotion of the whole life as worship: I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. Our bodies are to be presented to him. He purchased them. There we are to glorify him with our bodies. But if our bodies are to be presented, our will must first be conquered. Our will is to be submitted to his will. We are to discern his will and orient our lives to his Kingdom: the telling of his glory in salvation, the making of disciples of all nations. This is teleios of what we have seen in the throne. This is duty and privilege of those he has made priests. This is worship. And he is worthy of this. Give him the worship he is due by presenting yourself, your heart and mind and your will to him as those who are purchased by his blood.

## PRAY

Gospel Thread