

## **“The Vision of the Lamb of God”**

*Revelation 5*

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### **Revelation 5**

<sup>1</sup> 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 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 the 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.

### **Introduction**

We will begin by watching this video of everyone working together to help a lady who dropped her hat. (Video can be found at this site with the link provided - <https://streamable.com/jguuq>.)

*[Video description: Video opens with a grey building with what looks to be twelve floors. Each floor has a line of people. Someone from a lower floor throws a hat to the floor above them. As the hat goes higher from floor to floor, people all over the building cheer. Sometimes the hat does not get caught or it is not thrown properly to a person higher up, but people from the lower floors still have their hands outstretched to catch it should it fall. They repeat this process of moving the hat up each floor until eventually it gets thrown to one of the highest floors to its owner.]*

I can see something like this happen at CFC. Everybody worked together so the lady could get her hat. When she finally got it, everyone was cheering. I think Revelation 5 is like this. We know through chapter four and chapter five that we will all cast our crowns at the feet of our King. He will receive all the glory, honor, and praise. Everyone will praise and worship our God. We will look in this chapter because it will strengthen us to persevere because this is where we are headed.

Revelation 1-3 are Jesus' perspective of the church on earth. Chapter one is the vision of Jesus Christ. Chapters two and three are the vision of the earthly church of Jesus Christ, as it mentions seven churches that represent all the churches before Jesus returns. Now, in chapters four and five, the scene changes from the earthly perspective to the heavenly perspective of the church. It shows us what we ought to do: to constantly look up while we are living. It shows us why history happens and the purpose of all our lives. Chapter four is about the praise and worship of God the Father, especially for His creation. This chapter is the worship of the Son, Jesus Christ, for His redemption.

## **I. No one is worthy to open the scroll [1-4]**

The theme of worthiness from chapter four continues as John sees the sealed scroll in God's hand. In those days, scrolls were like books. The scrolls were sealed by wax. In His right hand, God held this scroll, so sacred that it seems nobody in the universe is worthy to open it.

### **A. Sealed scroll [1]**

The one seated on the throne is God the Father. The scroll contains God's purpose of the world, for His judgment and His redemption. Everything that will happen in the future from this moment on is written on this scroll.

In those days, first century readers would see this resembles a Roman will or contract deed, with the contents written in detail on the inside and summarized briefly outside. Both documents in those days were sealed with seven seals, so this was also a reminder. The writing on the front and back symbolizes the thoroughness of God's will. This is similar to the stone tablets of the Old Testament covenant law given to Moses. In Exodus

32:15, Moses received tablets containing the Ten Commandments, that “*tablets that were written on both sides*”. The reminder of a contract or will is important because if you do not keep a contract there is judgment, and a will contains the inheritance for family members. This scroll contains the judgment for the world apart from Christ, and the will or inheritance for those who are in Jesus Christ.

If somebody can open the seals, it means they can execute the contents of the documents. They are important and have authority. The scroll is sealed with seven seals. Seven signifies completion, meaning the scroll is completely sealed. Nobody else knows or can carry out the will of God. The future and the history both belong to God. No one can change it. For us, who are in Christ, our great and good God who is for us holds the future.

### **B. No one can open [2-3]**

A mighty angel proclaimed with a loud voice, powerful enough to issue a challenge to all of creation. His voice must carry out through heaven, earth, and under the earth. He asks who is worthy to open the scroll and the seals, but nobody is worthy. It reminds me of when someone playing basketball somehow wedges the ball between the rim and the backboard. No one can get the ball. We use shoes or try to get chairs, but we cannot get the ball down until somebody who can jump high comes and gets it. No one is worthy to get it except someone who is more athletic.

Jesus is the only one who is able to do this, but no one in heaven, on earth, and under the earth is worthy to open or look into the scroll. The phrase does not specify a place but it is a convention of phrase used to express the universality of the proclamation – no creature is worthy.

### **C. Weeping John [4]**

John looks at this and weeps because no one is found worthy. All creation in heaven, earth, and under the earth stood motionless and speechless. No one had the authority or power for such a task. If the scroll contains both the revelation and carrying out of the final drama of history, then John’s despair can be understood. If the seals are broken and the scroll opened, salvation history unfolds, culminating in the kingdom reign of the Messiah over the whole earth. So the scroll awaited one worthy of opening it and breaking its seals, and no servant of God introduced so far - neither these great elders or great living creatures or anyone else - has sufficient power or authority to unveil and implement God’s secret will. Sensing that the church’s hopes stood in serious jeopardy, John began to weep loudly.

My question to us is: what makes us weep? We cry because of something we love. We cry because of the frustration we have when we are not getting what we want or we are getting what we do not want. Do you ever weep for the purpose of God, because His will is not being carried out or not being done in this world? As we look into Scripture, Jesus will continually unveil the contents of this scroll to us and through us. Jesus uses the

people who will weep for righteousness, for the souls and salvation of mankind, for God's will to be done, for one more person coming to know the Lord, and worshiping, praising, and honoring Him. Jesus uses weepers. We need to be weeping prophets and priests of this world.

In that sense, we are called to be spiritually bipolar: sometimes happy but sometimes so sad. Mood shifts should take place with our two natures. We see God's will carried out, but know that there is still so much work to be done. When we read the news of this world and think about all the problems that exist and the need for God's mercy and justice to go forth through the Gospel, we weep. But as we read the Bible, we hope and continue to know that God is sitting on the throne. We need to be weepers as we look into the world, but we need to become hopers as we read the Scriptures. Until Christ returns and makes everything right, life without the completeness of Jesus is filled with tears. That is a natural thing to happen in this world until He returns. But one day, when He returns, He will wipe away all of our tears.

## **II. The Lamb is worthy to open the scroll [5-10]**

### **A. The Lion of the tribe of Judah [5]**

In verse five, the elder points toward Jesus, who is the Lamb of God and the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Jesus is the key that unlocks the mystery of history. This elder is a bigshot in heaven. He's one of the representatives of mankind. He is probably one of Jacob's sons or an apostle. But the elder does not want to give attention to himself, instead he points to Jesus. This is what we need to do all of our lives. There are no great men in this world. There are only puny men of a great God. Great ones are merely pointing forward to the greatest one, who is our Lord Jesus Christ.

Two names are mentioned here: the *Lion of the tribe of Judah* and the *Root of David*. The Lion is also mentioned in Genesis 49, and the Root of David is also mentioned in Isaiah 11. Both point forward to Jesus Christ and that He had conquered the world. The word "overcome" is constantly used in Revelation. Often, that word is used for believers in the midst of suffering in the church of Jesus Christ, for we will receive the strength from Him, by the one who has conquered, so we can conquer in our lives through our relationship with Him.

As one of the elders points forward to Jesus, John's sorrow is appeased. The name *Lion of Judah* shows how He is a great God, yet the name *Root of David* shows that He is a man. He is a God-man: the Son of God but also the Son of Man. As great as David, the anointed of God, was Jesus is God's anointed Son, the chosen one who will come and conquer on our behalf.

### **B. The Lamb that had been slain [6]**

As John sees Jesus, he does not see a Lion but a Lamb. Notice that the Lamb is between the throne, where God is sitting and the four living creatures and the elders. If we just read chapter four, we would think that the living creatures and the twenty-four elders are the ones who are closest to God the Father. But, between the throne and these four living creatures is Jesus.

Jesus Christ is at the center stage. The question for us is: is Jesus at the center of your life? The greatest beings in heaven point forward to Jesus. They praise and worship Him, but we forget so easily. Jesus Christ has to be the center of our hearts, lives, and focus in everything we do. Christ has to be at the center of our lives or He is outside. There is no in between. Christ has to be everything or He is nothing. Because of Christ, we do everything else, for Him and through Him and to Him.

As we look into verse six, we can observe two strange things. The previous verse says Jesus is a Lion, yet John sees Him as a slain Lamb. When we see Jesus, we should see a Lion who will devour and destroy us, but instead we who look at Him in faith see Him as a sacrificial Lamb. Revelation uses a special word for “lamb” twenty-nine times, distinct from the words for “lamb” outside Revelation. This word is used only once elsewhere in the Bible. In John 21:15, it says, *“When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ He said to him, ‘Feed my lambs.’”*

After Peter denies Jesus three times, and Jesus forgives Peter. Jesus reinstates Peter so he can be an apostle and one of the twenty-four elders. He says Peter to *“Feed my lambs”*. This is the same word used to describe Jesus. We are the lambs of God, and we are His lambs. We are lambs of the Lamb. When we are His, we become like the Lamb, growing to become like Jesus. We can become more like Him when we are fed more of Christ through the Word and prayer. We are also to feed others so that they can become like Him.

Another strange factor in verse 6 is that the Lamb looks as though it had been slain. We have many scars, deficiencies, and deformities in this world. Our bodies grow old and deteriorate. But the resurrection body will be in a heightened state and will continue to get better. When Jesus resurrects and ascends, He has the resurrection body, so He should have no scars. Yet first of all, He has a physical body. When He died and rose again, He remains a man. What an incredible sacrifice for the second person of the Trinity to make. Though He can become a God again, He remains a God-man for the whole of eternity on our behalf, because He underwent eternal change when He came to the earth for us. With the resurrection body, Jesus should not have had any scars, but He looks as though He had been slain. The scars remind us why we are there in heaven. I think that perhaps God intentionally left the scars so we can know we are to always praise, worship, honor, and love Him for the things He has done for us. The cross was the most gruesome death in the first century, but it was not a momentary evil to be forgotten. It was an eternally gracious act to be remembered forever and ever.

This Lamb is not a weak or wimpy lamb. Verse six says He has seven horns, eyes, and spirits of God. Horns represent power. The number seven represents the perfection of power: omnipotence. Seven eyes show that Jesus sees everything. Nothing escapes Him: omniscience. The seven spirits sent out do not represent seven Holy Spirits, but the complete work of the Holy Spirit going out to the world, through Jesus Christ and the throne of God. This is mentioned in John 16:7-8, *“<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. <sup>8</sup> And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment”*. From the throne of God comes the Spirit’s power to the church of Jesus Christ: so that we can be filled with the Holy Spirit, continue to serve and worship God, so every human being will be led to worship, honor, and praise Him.

### **C. The Lamb is worthy to open the scroll [7-10]**

The Lamb and Lion are not two separate things here. The Lion-like Lamb – God – and the Lamb-like Lion – man – make the God-man. This Lamb is worthy to open the scroll. The scroll was in the right hand of God. Jesus Christ went and received the scroll from the Father. Some commentators think this is the enthronement of Jesus Christ. Jesus dies, resurrects, ascends, and sits at the right hand of God. That place is the place of coronation, place of the King. It is likely that this is a representation of the coronation of Jesus in terms of the ancient enthronement ceremonies of the Middle East. In verse ten, the elders fall down, which also show that this could be the coronation of Jesus.

When Jesus takes the scroll, the elders fell down before the Lamb. Each elder held a harp and a golden bowl full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. We can see the power of worship - symbolized by the harp - and the power of prayer - symbolized by the bowls. The harp has power, as seen in Revelation 15:32, *“And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire – and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands.”* They defeat the enemy through the power of praise and worship.

Then there is prayer. Why do Christians need to pray to God? Not only does it meet our needs, it allows us to live for the glory of God and have His redemptive plan go on. You eat and study so that God’s redemptive plan can be carried out through you. We know this through the Lord’s prayer, which consists of six requests: (1) God’s name, (2) God’s kingdom, (3) God’s will, (4) physical needs [daily bread], (5) relation needs [forgiveness of debts], and (6) spiritual needs [lead us not into temptation]. The first floor of prayer is for our immediate needs. God fulfills these needs so we can live for the second floor – God’s name, kingdom, and will. Most of us live in the first floor, only asking God to give to us through our lives. For us, prayer is like a spare tire, only to be used in case of emergencies rather than a GPS or a steering wheel, which gives guidance. Pray that we will go from the first floor to the second floor, learning to pray so that as God gives us whatever we need, we use it all for the glory of God. When we pray and worship, we affect the activities of heaven, not just the activities on earth. We need to have different views and different uses for prayer as we consider these things.

The beasts and elders have a new song. It does not just mean new music, but it shows more so that Jesus has introduced a new era of the kingdom of God by His redemptive work. Therefore, the beasts and elders sing the new testimony of God. The apostle John lifted up his eyes to heaven and God gave him a glimpse of why the universe exists. He wrote it down so we can know: salvation is not the end but the beginning. The goal of missions is not just to save souls. The end is so each soul could glorify Him, praise and worship Him. Always be theocentric in the perspective of everything you do. Go. Do missions. Evangelize so that each and every person can praise, honor, and worship Him. We are headed to a place where all of us can continuously, moment by moment, sing new songs and testimonies of God.

The angels and elders are playing harps. In the Old Testament, these are called lyres and they were used for old psalms. Now, these instruments are being used to sing new songs of praise to the Lamb of God in the New Testament. A simple application for us is that we are often God's old instruments. We fail, but we will always be renewed and will be freshly used to sing new songs by God and for the glory of God.

Jesus is worthy through His death on the cross. He died on our behalf as the only person who could do that. Anybody could die for others, but it would not mean much. But the worth of Jesus - the sinless God-man - is infinite. By His blood, which is infinitely precious, He ransomed people from every language, people, and nation. It is the horror of the suffering of Jesus which made Him the hero of salvation for us. The language of "ransom" implies giving money to buy the slave to set them free from slavery. So, by His blood - instead of money - He frees us from the slavery of sin.

Chapter four and five contain five hymns. Two are in chapter four and they praise God. Two are in chapter five and they praise Jesus. The last hymn praises both God and Jesus. The hymn in verses nine and ten is the first of three hymns that praise Jesus. It shows that God will renew this earth rather than destroying it during the judgment time. He does not throw us away but renews us. When sin is gone, there will be new heavens and new earth, and there will be a part where we reign, serve, and live for His glory. This is what history, nations, and race are about: everyone will worship Him so there will be greatness of worship for God, because He alone is worthy of any and every praise that exists in this world. This is the meaning of all created things: all things exist by, through, and for Christ and for the Father who sits upon the throne.

When we think about the worth of Jesus, we need to radically redefine what we consider worthy. What is something of worth to you? Some people think it is money. What is beautiful to you? Some people think about external beautiful. But as we look into this passage, anything more like Jesus, anything sacrificial like Jesus, anything truly loving is worthy.

There was a lady with a disfigured face in New York City. One day, she visits her daughter's school and noticed that her daughter did not want to be with her in school. She realized the daughter was embarrassed of her. When the lady returned home, she thought

that it might be time to explain why she had a disfigured face to her daughter. She says, when the daughter was a baby, there was a fire in the house while the daughter was there. The mother decided she would rather die with her daughter than live without her. The mother went in to rescue her from the fire. That is where she got her disfigured face. Despite the bodily agony and pain, she rejoiced because of her daughter's smile. When the daughter found out, she kissed her mother's scars and was proud to be with her mother through the remainder of her life. Similarly, Jesus came to die on our behalf, and He will be forever known by His scars. We will always praise and worship him, living by and for Him.

### **III. The Lamb is worthy to be worshiped [11-14]**

Because Jesus is the only one who can open the scroll and carry on redemptive history, Jesus is worthy. He has died for us, resurrected, and ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father on the throne.

#### **A. Worthy is the Lamb [11-12]**

John sees a new feature in his vision. There are thousands upon thousands of angels surrounding the throne. The choir continues to expand through the five hymns in chapters four and five, until here where it contains myriads – perhaps hundred of millions, thousands of thousands – of angels who claim the Lamb worthy of sevenfold tribute: power, wealth, wisdom, might, honor, glory, and blessing. This shows the completeness of His worth, testifying to His deity. This must be God.

#### **B. All and every praise [13-14]**

John also heard every creature, and all that is in them, praising God. They praise Him who sits on the throne, the Father, and the Lamb, the Son. This is the summary of chapter four and five. God the Father and God the Son are deserving of all and every praise that exists, and history is headed this way.

The four living creatures said, “amen”, whereas the human elders fell down and worshiped. Why did the living creatures not fall down but the human elders did? Remember that the living creatures are flying with six wings, covering their eyes with two wings and their feet with two wings, symbolizing humility. They are flying around serving God, but the elders who cannot fly fall down and worship. Through different activities, they all do anything and everything to praise and worship the only true and deserving God. This is where all history is headed, so be strengthened and empowered.

### **Conclusion**

Some people are so discouraged, especially in the second semester. People rarely proclaim that they are doing so well or are spiritually on fire. People are like that after revival or after retreat,

but after a while, they instead feel depressed or discouraged. Are you discouraged? Do you feel like you are not growing spiritually? That life is hard? Your relationships are bad? That you are still immature and sinful, unable to overcome your addictions? That your ministry is ineffective? Your kids are evil? Those are just snapshot pictures, but according to the Bible, heaven is where we are headed.

John, the author of this book, and his brother James are a good example. They were known as the sons of thunder because of their temper. When somebody was against Jesus, they asked if they should pray for lightning to come down on those who oppose Jesus. They were so proud, it mentions in Mark 10:35-37, “<sup>35</sup> And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, ‘Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.’<sup>36</sup> And he said to them, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’<sup>37</sup> And they said to him, ‘Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.’” They come up to Jesus and ask Him to do whatever they ask, not just one thing. Sometimes this is how we pray. James and John want to sit at the right and left hand of Jesus. They are so proud that they want to be exalted alongside Him. It may be, in Revelation, John is witnessing the very moment he and his brother asked about: the coronation of Jesus. However, at the time, they did not know that this moment in Revelation was the moment they were talking about. The other ten disciples got angry at James and John because they had the same desire to be on the seat. But Jesus replies in Mark 10:43, “*But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant*”. At that time, John was so proud and thought that Jesus would be a political thing. On the island of Patmos in his nineties, John is a different person. Before, he was emotional because he wanted to be exalted. Here, he is emotional because Christ is not exalted. In Revelation, he weeps because nobody can open the scroll because only when the scroll is opened God and Jesus Christ will be exalted. He weeps because he desires for Jesus to be exalted on the throne of heaven and on the thrones of every heart.

Keep looking up. Keep seeing and praying and worshiping Jesus. Part of carrying on redemptive history is that we will grow. We will become like Jesus so that God will use us to help others become worshipers.

Thus, in this chapter, John is so much like Jesus, weeping like Jesus. Weepers become worshipers, so keep on weeping with holy frustration. In John 11:35, John records that the one he is worshipping also wept: “*Jesus wept.*” Jesus was weeping at Lazarus’ funeral. We weep at funerals because no one can make the dead come alive, but there is One who was able to make Lazarus come alive. That is Jesus. When He called Lazarus to come out, Lazarus came out of the grave. If Jesus just said, “come out”, all the dead of human history would have come out. One of the things that will happen in human history is the resurrection of the dead. This has to happen in redemptive history. No one can bring the dead to life except Jesus, and when He returns, He will not just say, “Lazarus, come out!” but “Come out!” All of the dead will be raised to life: some to judgment and some to inheritance.

To His glory, all and every praise belongs to the one seated on the throne and the Lamb of our good and great God. Until then we will have scars and tears. The scars of this world show the worth of Jesus Christ. But weepers become worshipers. The tomb of Jesus is empty. His throne

is not. Look up. The throne is occupied by the one who left His tomb empty. Until then, let us kiss the scars and keep on praising Jesus.

Let's pray.