



# Worthy

## Summary and Goal

John lamented that no one was able to open the scroll of destiny but then an elder identified that Jesus, the Lion of Judah who appeared as a slain lamb, was worthy. Jesus then took the scroll from the Father, unleashing a “new song” of worship that was joined by multitudes. There’s a reason we sing at Christmas—not because it makes us feel good but because Jesus is worthy.

### **Main Passages**

Revelation 5:1-14

### **Session Outline**

1. No One Worthy (Revelation 5:1-4)
2. Worthy is the Lamb Who Was Slain (Revelation 5:5-12)
3. Worthy is the Lamb Who Stands in the Midst of the Throne (Revelation 5:13-14)

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### **Theological Theme**

Jesus, the eternal Son of God, is worthy to open the scroll. He was worthy in His incarnational life and death and He is worthy in His resurrected glory upon the throne.

### **Christ Connection**

Our eternity hinges upon the worthiness of Christ that was proven in His sinless life as a man upon the earth and His perfect atoning death upon the cross.

### **Missional Application**

Missionaries go not just for the good of men’s souls, but primarily for the glory of the Lamb who sits upon the throne. He is worthy! Every knee will bend and every tongue will confess that the Lamb is Lord. We go and tell because He is worthy. “Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice; let the sea and all that fills it resound” (Psalm 96:11).

# Historical Context of Revelation

## Purpose

Much of the book of Revelation focuses on events at the end of the age (eschatology), more so than any other book in the Bible. But it also focuses on practical choices that believers and unbelievers must make in the course of their lives that have far-reaching consequences at the end.

## Author

The traditional view holds that the author of Revelation is the apostle John, who wrote the Fourth Gospel and the three letters of John. Evidences for this view include the following. (1) The writer referred to himself as “John” (1:4,9; 22:8). (2) He had personal relationships with the seven churches of Asia Minor (1:4,11; 2-3). (3) His circumstances at the time of writing (1:9) matched those of John the apostle (who was placed in Asia Minor from about AD 70 to 100 by reliable historical sources from the second century AD). (4) The saturation of the book with Old Testament imagery and echoes implies a Jewish writer, like John, operating in overwhelmingly Gentile Asia Minor.

## Setting

The initial audience that received the book of Revelation was a group of seven local churches in southwest Asia Minor (1:11; 2-3). Some of these congregations were experiencing persecution (2:9-10,13), probably under the Roman emperor Domitian (ruled AD 81-96). Others had doctrinal and practical problems (2:6,13-15,20-23). Also behind these surface problems was the backdrop of unseen but powerful spiritual warfare (2:10,14,24; 3:9).

## Special Features

The resurrected, glorified Jesus Christ revealed himself to the apostle John, who had been imprisoned “on the island called Patmos” (1:9). Christ’s twofold purpose was: (1) to “unveil” a spiritual diagnosis for seven of the churches in Asia Minor with which John was familiar (chaps. 2-3), and (2) to reveal to John a series of visions setting forth events and factors related to the end times (chaps. 4-22).

The book of Revelation provides an almost complete overview of theology. There is much in this book about Christ, mankind and sin, the people of God (both the church and Israel), holy angels, and Satan and the demons. There is important material on God’s power and tri-unity (i.e., Trinity), plus aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit and the nature of Scripture.

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## Session Plan

### Worthy

#### Introduction

- ❓ Have you ever discovered a musician, writer, book, or television show that completely swept you off of your feet?
- ❓ What was it that caught your attention and compelled you so?
- ❓ How did this fascination and excitement lead you to share with others?

Our passage today recounts the happenings in heaven that will bring this final vision to fruition. It is a high and holy work, far beyond any political maneuver or military campaign that the earth has ever known. What happened here was possible to grasp by John or us. What we can be certain of is that all of this will be accomplished and carried out only by the one who is worthy.

#### 1. No One Worthy (Revelation 5:1-4)

John wept because he longed for the fulfillment of God's purposes. Those who are children of God yearn for their Father to bring about His purposes. Jesus gave us words for this when He taught us to pray, "Your Kingdom come. Your will be done" (Matthew 6:10). A longing and preference for God's will is an issue of progressive sanctification. It takes time for the child of God to grow up into their salvation sufficiently to develop distaste for his or her own strivings and to savor the purposes and plans of God.

- ❓ What did the scroll contain? What could be meant by this scroll in the hand of the God Almighty?
- ❓ Why did John weep? Why was an absence of one to open the scroll worthy of tears? How should our hearts reflect John's in this moment?
- ❓ What would deem one worthy to open this scroll of God?

## 2. Worthy is the Lamb Who Was Slain (Revelation 5:5-12)

Jesus is the eternal and mighty warrior and is uniquely worthy to open the seals. But He isn't only the Lion from the tribe of Judah or the Root of David; He is also the Lamb that was slain. The image of Jesus as the lamb is the most important title used to describe Him in this passage.

- Who was worthy to open the seals? What is the meaning of the titles ascribed to Him?
- How are we to understand this image of Jesus as a slain lamb?

## 3. Worthy is the Lamb Who Stands in the Midst Throne (Revelation 5:13-14)

It's important to note that the Lamb that was like one that had been slaughtered wasn't lying lifelessly upon the throne. John says that he was "standing" (5:6). Jesus' first coming was humble, foolish, and weak from man's perspective. His second coming will be the opposite.

- How do verses 13 and 14 describe those who were observing the Lamb?
- What drew such worship from them? How should we respond likewise?

## Conclusion

- Remember, you are seated at the table in the Kingdom of God because of mercy and grace. You have not earned your way there. Jesus earned it for you. How do you daily recognize and remain aware of your own unworthiness? How can you honor and esteem Christ, remembering that your eternity depends upon Christ's worthiness?
- How should this reality about Christ grow us in Christian unity with other believers who have all been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb?
- How should this finished work of Christ on our behalf compel us to share with others who will be lost apart from the truth of the gospel?

### Genesis 49:8-10

*Judah, your brothers will praise you. Your hand will be on the necks of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you. Judah is a young lion— my son, you return from the kill. He crouches; he lies down like a lion or a lioness—who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah or the staff from between his feet until he whose right it is comes and the obedience of the peoples belongs to him.*



## Expanded Session Content

# Worthy

### Introduction

- ❓ Have you ever discovered a musician, writer, book, or television show that completely swept you off of your feet?
- ❓ What was it that caught your attention and compelled you so?
- ❓ How did this fascination and excitement lead you to share with others?

When something grabs our hearts and captivates our minds we generally want to share it with others, don't we? Why is that? It's because we have tested the thing and found it to be worthy. We find it worthy of our time, attention, money, and devotion. Earthly things inevitably let us down, and we find something else we deem more worthy.

Today's lesson is about worthiness, namely the supreme worth of Jesus Christ and the attention He is due. If we come to a point where our hearts and minds are captivated by the Lamb who was slain then we will be fixed on something of infinite worth that will never disappoint. The unfathomable worth of Jesus far outshines all of the trinkets that catch our eye throughout our lifetime. He is enough; sufficient to satisfy the longing of our hearts and the deep need of our souls. The Lamb who sits upon the throne is worthy. No other person or thing compares.

### Session Summary

The book of Revelation is about the consummation of all things. The main message of John the Revelator was that God will execute justice against His enemies and finally and fully rescue His people. This is the account of the passing away of the first earth and the establishment of the holy city—New Jerusalem—in which God will dwell with man. This will be a place where they will be His people and God Himself will be with them as their God (Revelation 21:1-4).

Our passage today recounts the happenings in heaven that will bring this final vision to fruition. It is a high and holy work, far beyond any political maneuver or military campaign that the earth has ever known. What happened here was possible to grasp by John or us. What we can be certain of is that all of this will be accomplished and carried out only by the one who is worthy.

## 1. No One Worthy (Revelation 5:1-4)

This passage is preceded by a peek into the throne room of God in heaven. There we are shocked and awed by the grandeur and greatness of the eternal King. We are moved to cry out with Isaiah that we are not worthy to be in the presence of this God. He is “Holy, holy, holy...Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”

The stage was set for the Lord God Almighty to act. He held in His hand a scroll that was to be opened by the breaking of its seals. John’s contemporary readers would probably have been familiar with a scroll such as the one described in Revelation 5, though it wasn’t exactly typical. A double-sided inscribed scroll was rare because of the irregular texture that the back of a scroll would normally have. However, Roman wills or contract deeds were often double-sided. The information was written in detail on the inside of the scroll, but was briefly summarized on the outside.

-  What did the scroll contain? What could be meant by this scroll in the hand of the God Almighty?
-  Why did John weep? Why was an absence of one to open the scroll worthy of tears? How should our hearts reflect John’s in this moment?

It’s no mystery what the scroll contained, though we are never told explicitly of its contents. The opening of the scroll set into motion the first cycle of judgments. The scroll contained God’s purposes and plan for history. This heavenly book laid out the destiny of the world. It was God’s consummate design of judgment and redemption. However, the seven seals must be broken in order for its contents to be disclosed and then executed.

John wept because he longed for the fulfillment of God’s purposes. Those who are children of God yearn for their Father to bring about His purposes. Jesus gave us words for this when He taught us to pray, “Your Kingdom come. Your will be done” (Matthew 6:10). A longing and preference for God’s will is an issue of progressive sanctification. It takes time for the child of God to grow up into their salvation sufficiently to develop distaste for his or her own strivings and to savor the purposes and plans of God.

We may have trouble seeing through the fog now, but as heaven draws nearer so will our perception of the goodness of God and His purposes. We must crucify the flesh and avail ourselves to the school of God's power and mercy.

John wept because he loved God's will and longed to see God's purposes fulfilled, but there was no one found in heaven, on earth, or under the earth who was worthy to take the scroll from the hand of God the Father and break its seals and execute its contents.

 What would deem one worthy to open this scroll of God?

No mere man could be worthy because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). How could it be that the creature could be worthy of such a task to fulfill the ultimate, consummating purposes of the Creator? We should remember that every human being who has lived, including all the great figures of faith that we often look to imitate, would have been unable to take the scroll. Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, David, Isaiah...none were worthy. All of these have turned aside and become worthless (Romans 3:11).

No human is worthy because no human has earned righteousness. We are bankrupted transgressors who, like Mephibosheth in 2 Samuel 9, are crippled and have a seat at the King's table because of His mercy and kindness, and for no other reason. We deserve condemnation, expulsion, judgment, and wrath. What we have received, however, is steadfast love. Yes, we are a redeemed and grateful people. We are a rejoicing and worshipping people. But, we are not, now or ever, people who are worthy to take the scroll and break its seals.

No angel was worthy because they, too, are created beings. While they would be called upon to participate in the events of the final days, they would do so as dependent and subservient creatures. Not a single angel is worthy to seek to establish his own authority or garner glory for himself.

## 2. Worthy is the Lamb Who Was Slain (Revelation 5:5-12)

Yet, there was a being that was worthy. An elder said to John, "Do not weep. Look, the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered so that he is able to open the scroll and its seven seals" (5:5).

 Who was worthy to open the seals? What is the meaning of the titles ascribed to Him?

### Praying God's Worthiness

We must learn to pray with the Puritans:

*Thou hast done for me all things well, hast remembered, distinguished, indulged me. All my desires have not been gratified, but thy love denied them to me when fulfillment of my wishes would have proved my ruin or injury. My trials have been fewer than my sins, and when I have kissed the rod it has fallen from thy hands. Thou hast often wiped away my tears, restored peace to my mourning heart, chastened me for my profit. All thy work for me is perfect, and I praise thee.<sup>1</sup>*



How are we to understand this image of Jesus as a slain lamb?

Jesus Christ is worthy. He will break the seals of the scroll and look into it and carry out its contents. The elder first called Him “the Lion from the tribe of Judah.” This title calls to mind Jacob’s blessing upon Judah in which he bestowed authority over his brothers. Let’s read this blessing. It isn’t hard to see how Jesus embodies this title.

*Judah, your brothers will praise you. Your hand will be on the necks of your enemies; your father’s sons will bow down to you. Judah is a young lion— my son, you return from the kill. He crouches; he lies down like a lion or a lioness—who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah or the staff from between his feet until he whose right it is comes and the obedience of the peoples belongs to him. (Genesis 49:8-10)*

The elder also referred to Jesus as the Root of David. The Old Testament vision of the Messiah was that He would spring from Jesse’s root and would restore David’s dynasty (Isaiah 11:1, 10). Jesus is the branch springing from Jesse’s root, but the elder referred to Him as the root of David because He preceded David and is the source of David’s rule.

Jesus is the eternal and mighty warrior and is uniquely worthy to open the seals. But He isn’t only the Lion from the tribe of Judah or the Root of David; He is also the Lamb that was slain. The image of Jesus as the lamb is the most important title used to describe Him in this passage. The frequency alone ought to cause us to take special note:

- I saw one like a slaughtered lamb (5:6)
- the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb (5:8)
- Worthy is the Lamb who was slaughtered (5:11)
- and to the Lamb, forever and ever! (5:13)

The emphasis on this image of Jesus as the slain lamb is resounding. This is not only true for this passage, but the overall description of the Messiah throughout the Bible. “He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth. Like a lamb led to the slaughter and like a sheep silent before her shearers, he did not open his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). And, “Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29) What other image could be more appropriate?

Jesus is the true and better fulfillment of the Law. Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness for sin (Hebrews 9:22). God instructed Israel to bring a spotless lamb to be sacrificed for their sins. It was to be torn and its blood shed. “For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have

### **Worship That Leads to Mission**

Missions exists because worship doesn’t. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever.<sup>2</sup>

appointed it to you to make atonement on the altar for your lives, since it is the lifeblood that makes atonement” (Leviticus 17:11).

Jesus, the righteous one, Son of God, God the Son, the spotless Lamb, was torn for our transgressions and for this reason He is worthy. “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slaughtered, and you purchased people for God by your blood from every tribe and language and people and nation” (5:9).

### 3. Worthy is the Lamb Who Stands in the Midst Throne (Revelation 5:13-14)

It’s important to note that the Lamb that was like one that had been slaughtered wasn’t lying lifelessly upon the throne. John says that he was “standing” (5:6). Jesus’ first coming was humble, foolish, and weak from man’s perspective. His second coming will be the opposite.

-  How do verses 13 and 14 describe those who were observing the Lamb?
-  What drew such worship from them? How should we respond likewise?

John reported that every creature in heaven, on earth, and under the earth was ascribing to Jesus blessing, honor, glory, and power. The four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders actually fell down and worshipped Him. This is a picture of worship in spirit and truth.

Jesus is worshipped as God because Jesus is God. Christians profess faith in a Triune God. We are monotheists and believe in one true God, but we believe the one true God is unique in His nature in that He is one essence, but three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

The vision that John related in Revelation 5 was the fulfillment of Paul’s words to the Philippians:

*For this reason God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow— in heaven and on earth and under the earth— and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11).*

Jesus wasn’t only the lamb being led away to slaughter, but He is also the resurrected Lord. He isn’t fragile or weak. He isn’t harmless or defeated. He is alive and well, and His second coming will bring terror across the face of the earth for those who have rejected Him.

## Conclusion

Jesus, the Lion from the tribe of Judah and the Root of David, is worthy to take the scroll from God Almighty, break its seals, and reveal its contents. Jesus, God the Son, works in cooperation with God the Father to accomplish the consummation of all things to the praise of His glory. Jesus is worthy because He purchased men for God by being obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. His perfect, spotless sacrifice for sinners makes Him worthy. He is also the resurrected King. He didn't remain lifeless and broken in the tomb. God the Father raised Him up and He is our perfect Prophet, Priest, and King. In every regard, Jesus is worthy.

-  How do you daily recognize and remain aware of your own unworthiness? How can you honor and esteem Christ, remembering that your eternity depends upon Christ's worthiness?
-  How should this reality about Christ grow us in Christian unity with other believers who have all been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb?
-  How should this finished work of Christ on our behalf compel us to share with others who will be lost apart from the truth of the gospel?

## Prayer of Response

*Close in prayer, thanking God for the Lamb who was slain for the sins of the world. Thank God that Jesus is worthy in every way that we are not and for the reality that we have been restored to Him through the finished work of Jesus.*

## Additional Resources

- *The Advent of the Lamb of God* by Russ Ramsey
- *The Lamb of God* by Nancy Guthrie
- *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary: Exalting Jesus in Revelation* by Daniel Akin

## For Next Week

### Session Title

- The Last Battle

### Main Passages

- Revelation 19:6-16

### Session Outline

1. Our Lord God, the Almighty, Reigns! (Revelation 19:6)
2. The Marriage of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-10)
3. Faithful and True (Revelation 19:11-16)

### Memorize

*I heard every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, on the sea,  
and everything in them say,*

*Blessing and honor and glory and power  
be to the one seated on the throne,  
and to the Lamb, forever and ever!*

-Revelation 5:13

### Daily Readings

- Monday - Colossians 1:15
- Tuesday - 1 Corinthians 15:57
- Wednesday - 1 John 5:4
- Thursday - John 16:33
- Friday - Colossians 2:15
- Saturday - Proverbs 21:31

## Extended Commentary

### Revelation 5:1-14

5:1 The right hand of God symbolizes power and authority. With writing on both sides echoes Ezk 2:9-10, where God showed the prophet a scroll with words written “on the front and back . . . of lamentation, mourning, and woe.” The scroll John saw foretold woe (8:13; 9:12; 11:14), but it also disclosed God’s perfect plan (symbolized by the seven seals) of judgment and the redemption of his creation, which will culminate in the end times. Because the outer edge of the scroll was sealed, the contents could be seen only when all seven seals were removed. Thus, as the seals are opened in chap. 6, what takes place is not the content of the entire scroll, but only those judgments that precede it being fully opened.

5:2-4 The apostle John was emotionally distraught because no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was found worthy to open the scroll and read the destiny of the world.

5:5-7 Speaking of Jesus as the Lion from the tribe of Judah echoes the messianic prophecy in Gn 49:9-10. Christ was able to open the scroll and its seven seals on the basis of an accomplished fact—his death on the cross like a slaughtered lamb (Is 53:7; Jn 1:29). In the apocalyptic book of Daniel, horns stand for power and authority (Dn 7:8,20,24). God’s sending of the seven spirits immediately after the description of the redemptive work of the Lamb (5:6) may preview “the eternal gospel” being preached climactically to the entire world in 14:6-7. The Lamb taking the scroll out of the right hand of the Father signifies a transfer of authority, allowing the Lamb to fulfill the contents of the scroll (i.e., the judgments and other events of the rest of the Apocalypse). For a parallel account, see Dn 7:13-14.

5:8 Believers’ prayers are described as filling golden bowls before the throne of God. The gold emphasizes their reality and exceeding value to God. The word saints means “holy ones.” These are not elite and exceptional Christians. Instead, the NT uses this term for all believers in Christ (Rm 1:7).

5:9-10 The new song sung in heaven about Christ is inspired by his redemptive work, the shedding of his blood on the cross. The target group for redemption (described as every tribe . . . nation; cp. 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15, where the same terms are used in differing order) is the same group that is identified in the Great Commission: “all nations” (Mt

28:19). The reference to Christ's shed blood and the phrase a kingdom and priests echo Rv 1:5-6 and may be partially fulfilled in heaven in 7:15. The promise that they will reign on the earth is fulfilled in 20:6.

5:11-14 This scene looks ahead to the time when "every knee will bow... and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Php 2:10-11).<sup>3</sup>

## References

1. Bennett, Arthur. *The Valley of Vision: a Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975.
2. Piper, John. *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010.
3. *CSB Study Bible: Christian Standard Bible*. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017.