

He is Worthy! (Part 4)
Revelation 4-5
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Take your Bible, if you will, and turn with me to Revelation chapter 4 and 5. We're looking especially at chapter 5.

I was struck this week as I was thinking about this passage with the fact that the process to appoint a Supreme Court Justice in our country is relatively simple and short. The president notifies the Senate of his nomination - usually in writing. Once the Senate receives the nomination, the Senate Judiciary Chair authorizes a pre-hearing investigation that is, in turn, followed by public hearings at the Judiciary Committee. Then, of course, the Judiciary Committee makes its recommendation to the full Senate. Once the nomination reaches the entire Senate for a vote, only a simple majority is needed to confirm the nominee. Those of us who've lived a while have watched a number of these appointments unfold. Here's the remarkable thing: it takes less time to be appointed to the Supreme Court than it took some of you to get a job. It takes two to three months of hearings to choose a person who is going to occupy one of the nine most powerful roles in our country, the ultimate judges in our nation.

But that's nothing compared to the passage we come to tonight because, through the amazing condescension of divine revelation, we are allowed in Revelation 4 and 5 to witness the selection process for the greatest judicial and governmental role in the universe - the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, the Judge of everything. That's what's happening in these two chapters. It's the divine selection process.

Chapters 4 and 5 really begin the heart of this book and they teach us that God is infinitely worthy to sit on the universe's throne and to judge its rebellion against Him and He will delegate that role to His Son. These chapters are a kind of prelude to what's ahead. They introduced us to the great judgments God will unleash on the earth during the Great Tribulation. The heavenly events in these chapters occur, in fact, just before that seven-year tribulation period begins on earth.

Now, so far, we have looked at chapter 4 and, in chapter 4, we saw the scene in Heaven, the Father and the throne. There, we're allowed to see the Father, the One sitting on the throne, and the majestic, magnificent setting around Him. Last time we studied Revelation, we began to study the central event in this vision and that brings us to chapter 5. I've entitled chapter 5 - The Search in Heaven: The Lamb &

the Book. Let's read it again together just to give us the flow of this passage. Revelation 5, you follow along.

I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?" And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; and one of the elders said to me, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals." And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. "You have made them to be a Kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever." And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped.

Now, as this drama in chapter 5 unfolds, John's gaze is captured here by three great sights. Last time, we looked at the first of those sights. It is the book with seven seals. We looked at the Father's mysterious book. Verse 1 says in His right hand was a book, literally. Sitting on the open right hand of God, in a figurative sense, was a scroll - a scroll of unparalleled importance. Verse 1 says it was, "written inside on

the back and sealed up with seven seals.” The scroll was rolled up and seven seals were placed along the straight line at the end of the scroll. The seven seals underscored its importance and that it's perfectly sealed because there's only one person in the universe who's qualified to open it.

Now as we learned last time, this scroll in the hand of God in Revelation 5 is a title deed, like the one in Jeremiah. It is the title deed to the earth. In verses 2 and 3, we witnessed the angel's fruitless search. He cries out, “is there anyone worthy to open this book and to break its seals?” And the angel's question echoes through the universe. Every intelligent being hears it and, in response, verses 2 and 3 tell us there is a universal silence. Which brings us to the apostle's inconsolable grief in verse 4. “Then I began to weep greatly.” John was deeply saddened because it seemed that God's redemptive plans would be postponed. And then, in response to his grief, you have one of the elder's triumphant announcement to John. “Stop weeping (verse 5); behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome to open the book and it's seven seals.” Both of these titles, as we noted last time, are Messianic. Messiah had to come from the tribe of Judah. The King of Kings had to be in the line of David. Both of these titles describe Him as the great warrior King of God's people. The elder tells John the only one worthy to take the book and open its seals is the Messiah. So, the first sight that John had was the book, was seven seals.

Next, he turns and sees the Lamb with seven horns. The elder tells him that the one who has conquered is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, but when John turns, to his astonishment, what he sees is a Lamb. Mounce writes, “the Lamb in Revelation is the glorified Christ enthroned with God and destined to be victorious over all the opposing forces in the universe.” This is the Lamb.

Now, what John sees in this vision reveal several defining characteristics of the Lamb in this scene.

First of all, we learned that He's at the center of everything. This Lamb is at the center of everything. Verse 6 says, “and I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders.” A very similar expression of this occurs back in chapter 4, verse 6, and there, it means in the center. That's what it means here. In other words, standing in the very middle of Heaven, in the middle of millions of angels, in the middle of all the redeemed, in the middle of the cherubim and the seraphim, in the middle of the four living ones, in the middle of the throne of God, stands the Lamb. And it's the place that He holds throughout this book. He is the center of everything. Revelation 7:17 says, “the Lamb is in the center of the throne.” So, He's at the center of everything.

Secondly, as John sees Him here, He's a sacrificial Lamb. Verse 6 says, "I saw... a Lamb standing." Now, we already saw a description of Christ back in chapter 1 and how did Christ appear in chapter 1? As a man. We'll meet Him again in chapter 19 where He again resembles a man riding a horse. Why? Because Jesus is still fully human as well as fully God. He's still exactly like us. He has a human body, a glorified one, and He has a human soul like us, but He is also fully and completely God. So, He still has a glorified body. He looks like a man glorified because He is. He doesn't actually look like a Lamb any more than He actually looks like a Lion. These are figures of speech to describe things that are spiritually true about Him. Now, this description of Christ as a Lamb obviously has its roots in the Old Testament. As we saw this morning, that great sacrificial system. Jesus is the fulfillment of that entire system. You remember when John the Baptist saw Christ and realized who He was, in John 1:29, what did he say? "Behold the Lamb of God (God's Lamb) who takes away the sin of the world." He's the Passover Lamb. 1 Corinthians 5:7, "Christ our Passover has been sacrificed." He's the Lamb of Isaiah 53:7. "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so, He did not open His mouth." In fact, I know that's true because in Acts 8, Philip applies that verse from Isaiah 53:7 to Christ as he evangelizes the Ethiopian eunuch. The Greek word for lamb here means either "lamb" or, on occasion because of the form of it, it can mean "little lamb." Outside of Revelation, this word is only used once. It's used in John 21:15 when Jesus says to Peter, "tend My lambs." There's another word that's used throughout the rest of the scripture, but in Revelation, this particular word for lamb occurs twenty-eight times referring to Jesus Christ. It occurs one other time referring elsewhere, but twenty-eight times to Jesus Christ. It presents Jesus as the complete fulfillment of the entire Old Testament sacrificial system - the daily and national sacrifices offered for the nation, the individual sacrifices offered by the worshippers in Israel, the Passover lamb, as well as the animals offered on the Day of Atonement. He's the fulfillment of it all, as the writer of Hebrews says. He is the Lamb. He's God's Lamb. He's the One all those animal sacrifices pointed to.

Verse 6 goes on to say, "and I saw between the throne with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing as if slain." Now, that's a very interesting expression. "Standing" means, literally, in the Greek text it says, "having taken His stand." "The Lamb, having taken His stand." The main point is: He's not dead. He's alive. So, the focus here is not on Jesus' crucifixion, the actual death of Christ, but on the results of His death and His resurrection. He's standing. He's not lying there dead. It's like Revelation 1:18 where Jesus says to John, "I was dead, and behold. I am alive forevermore." He's standing. But notice, He's, "like a Lamb that's been slain." Literally "having been slaughtered" or "having been sacrificed." So, He's standing alive in Heaven, but He has the marks that show that He's been

slaughtered in the past. Apparently, the wounds from our Lord's crucifixion, the same wounds the disciples saw in His glorified body after the resurrection, will remain visible for all eternity. Now I know what some of you are thinking. Does that mean mine will too? No. Yours are not important. His are. His will remind us of the price of our redemption forever. "A Lamb standing, as if having been slaughtered." So, He's a sacrificial Lamb.

There's something else that John sees here about Him. And that is: this Lamb shares the attributes of God.

First of all, He's omnipotent, like God. Verse 6 says He's one, "having seven horns." In the Old Testament, the horn symbolizes power. Those animals that had a horns, you can imagine, we're the ones who were the victors in battles, as opposed to those who didn't have them. So, it symbolized power. For example, in Deuteronomy 33:17, "as the firstborn of his ox, majesty is his, and his horns are the horns of the wild ox; with them he will push the peoples all at once, to the ends of the earth." So, the horn speaks of this sort of strong power. So, this Lamb is not a typical lamb. He is a Lamb that's a warrior King with perfect, irresistible power, just like God.

And He's omniscient. Verse 6 goes on to say, "and He has seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God." Now, we've already encountered this expression and I've explained it before. The seven eyes – speak, seven, of course to perfection - seven eyes mean you have perfect vision. This is better than 20/20. It leads, this perfect vision, leads to perfect knowledge, which, therefore, leads to perfect wisdom. The point here is nothing escapes the notice of the Lamb. He misses nothing that happens. He has a perfect knowledge of all things and perfect wisdom to execute all His plans. It goes on to say these seven eyes, "are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth." What's that about? Well, theologically, many of you understand that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. And this expression is saying that. He's sent out, the Holy Spirit's sent out by the Lamb. And this expression here, figuratively describes that the Holy Spirit serves as the agent of the Lamb to ensure that He knows everything that's happening everywhere in the universe. We've talked about someone being our eyes, right? "He's my eyes," in that department or in that workplace. Well, the Holy Spirit is the eyes of the Lamb. He sees everything. He knows everything. He's everywhere. And therefore, the Holy Spirit, His Spirit, has been sent into all the world and provides perfect knowledge of all earth's events.

Another snapshot, or characteristic, that we get of this Lamb - not only is He at the center of everything, He's a sacrificial Lamb, He shares the attributes of God - but He's the rightful owner of earth's title deed.

Verse 7, “and He came” - from His place right at the center of God's throne, right next to the Father – “and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.” Now, what does this picture? When the One sitting on the throne, the Father, allows the Lamb to take the scroll, He is authorizing Him to execute the divine plans within it for the redemption of the world. He's giving Jesus authority. Jesus has authority inherently, as a member of the Trinity, but as one of us, He was given this authority in response to His work on earth. You remember what He said after His resurrection in Matthew 28? “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” He has authority to judge - to judge the world. John 5:22, “not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son.” And He gave Him authority to execute judgment because He is the Son of Man. Acts 10:42, Peter says to those who had gathered there at the home of Cornelius, “He ordered us to preach to the people and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.” On Mars Hill in Acts 17:31, Paul says God, “has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness, through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.” And you see this authority to judge as the rest of Revelation unfolds. He takes the scroll and watch what happens. Look at chapter 6, verse 1. “Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals,” and judgment unfolds. Verse 3, “He broke the second seal.” Verse 5, “when He broke the third seal.” Verse 7, “when the Lamb broke the fourth seal.” Verse 9, “when the Lamb broke the fifth seal.” Verse 12, “I looked when He broke the sixth seal.” Revelation 8:1, “when the Lamb broke the seventh seal.” Go back to chapter 6:15-16, as the seals are broken and, particularly the sixth seal, it says,

The kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains and they said to the mountains and the rocks, “fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

Jesus has authority to judge this planet and its rebellion.

He also has authority to rule the world forever. It was promised, you remember, to one of David's, descendants in 2 Samuel 7:16, “your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne will be established forever.” God says, “I'm going to make a dynasty for you and it'll be an eternal dynasty. Here's who it will be, Psalm 2:

I will tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, "you are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession."

And, of course, this is beautifully pictured in Daniel, chapter 7. We studied together where, "One like a son of man," comes up to the Ancient of Days. And here we're told that He was, "given dominion, glory, and a kingdom, so that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed." And even at Jesus' birth, in the annunciation to Mary, that we'll study in a couple of weeks, Luke 1:32, Gabriel says to Mary,

"the Lord God will give your Son the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever and His kingdom will have no end."

He has the right to judge and He has the authority to rule. And all of that's pictured in what's unfolding in this scene in chapter 5.

So, in chapter 5, John is riveted on three great sights. We've seen the book with seven seals. We've seen the Lamb with seven horns. The rest of this chapter, the focus is on the song with seven chords, in verses 8-14.

Mounce is right when he writes of this section, "nowhere else in the literature of worship will one find the scene of such unrestrained praise and adoration." In these verses, literally all creation joins together in adoration and worship of the Lamb. It begins with the four living ones. "The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders," in verses 8-10, notice, worship when He had taken the book. So, what prompts their worship is when Jesus comes and takes the scroll, the title deed to the earth - when He's established the fact that He's worthy and the Father allows Him to take it. When that happens, worship breaks out in Heaven. "When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb." By the way, don't miss the fact that here, those in Heaven extend the same worship to the Lamb as they did, in chapter 4. to the Father. This underscores Jesus' complete deity because only God is to be worshipped like this. You remember later, in this very book, one of the angels says to John. Up. What are you doing?

Verse 8 goes on to say, "each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." Now, it's unclear here, whether these harps and bowls belong to the living ones - the living creatures and the elders - or only to the elders. Since the living creatures - that angelic group of

four that we studied together - since they have no priestly role, I think it's likely that only the elders are intended here as having the harps and these golden bowls. Each one, notice, holding a harp. That's the traditional instrument used in the singing of the Old Testament Psalms. For example, in Psalm 33, to, "give thanks to the Lord with the lyre; sing praises to Him with a harp of ten strings." So, the harps represent the praises of God's people, the redeemed. The twenty-four elders, remember, represent the redeemed. There they are likely the apostles and the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel representing all of the redeemed of God. And they represent the people that came to faith with - Old Testament believers and New Testament believers. And together they have harps, meaning that they lift their praise to God. And then it says each of the elders - again, representing the redeemed - also hold a golden bowl full of incense. Don't think some large, you know, some high bowl but rather, think more like a flat saucer, more like a pasta bowl. A large open-mouth bowl. These were used often in the Tabernacle and the Temple. We're going to meet them again later in this book as the bowl judgments unfold. Incense was in these bowls. Incense was commonly used in the Old Testament as a symbol of the prayers of God's people. In fact, incense was burned every day right before the Holy of Holies on the altar of incense. Why? Because, as the as the smell and smoke from that incense arose and wafted into the Holy of Holies, it pictured the prayers of God's people coming into the presence of God. So here, these golden bowls full of incense represent the prayers of God's people. Psalm 141:2 says, "may my prayer be counted as incense before You; the lifting up of my hands as the evening offering."

So, what are these prayers? Praise we get. We see praise unfold in this chapter. We know what they're praising God for, but what are these prayers? Well, it likely - and we can't be absolutely sure - but when you look ahead, when you look at 7:13, we learn about these believers who are put to death because of their faith during the tribulation. Verse 14, "these are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." And then you go down to chapter 8:3 and you see there that:

the prayers of all the saints were on the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints went up before God (out of the angel's hands).

What is this? Probably the prayers here. Certainly, in chapter 7 and 8, and probably back in chapter 5, are the prayers of God's people for God to act. "God, how long? How long will You let Your people be persecuted? How long will You let rebellion stand against You? How long before You make a name for your Son? How long will You tolerate mankind's rebellion?" So, they have

the prayers of God's people. The harps and the bowls, then, represent the collective praise and the collective prayers of God's people. Now just stop and think about that a minute. What does it feel like – feel, and I use that word intentionally – what does it feel like to you when you praise God? What does it feel like to you when you pray? Does it feel to you like anything really significant is happening? It doesn't matter what you feel. God hears. And here you see the prayers of God's people like incense ascending to God. He hears. He knows. And He'll answer in His time. It's truly amazing. This wonderful little snapshot reminds us that the praise and prayers of God's people are precious to God. He doesn't miss them, not one, that's genuinely offered. If you praised the Lord from your heart tonight, He heard. It ascended into His presence just as surely as this praise. If you pray to God genuinely, sincerely, as one of His own to Him, it doesn't matter what you feel. He hears just as truly. It's like those prayers are collected in His presence. He never forgets.

Notice, John now explains how they use their harps. Verse 9, “and they sang a new song.” The pronoun “they” here could be referring to both men and angels or it could be referring to the redeemed only. I think it's both because I think we're going to see the angels, in a minute, join the song. And they sang at the creation. Job 38:7, at creation, “the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” But notice, it's, “a new song.” If you've read the Psalms, you've encountered that expression often. What does it mean? It describes the appropriate way to respond to a new expression of God's love and grace. You see, there are songs we sing because of what's been done in the past but when God does something new, when He interacts in our lives in a unique way, it just calls out - every new expression of God's love and grace - calls for a new song of gratitude and praise. In chapter 4, the elders praise the Father for creation. In chapter 5, they now praise the Lamb for redemption. Verse 9 says, “they were saying, ‘worthy are You.’” I noted when we studied chapter 4, that this expression was often used when the Roman Emperor arrived. But John reminds us here that God alone is worthy of this kind of praise. This Lamb is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and He is worthy, verse 9 says, “to take the book and to break its seals.” Now, this new song goes on to explain three reasons the Lamb is worthy to open the book and to break its seals.

First of all, the historical fact of His death. Verse 9 says, “for (because) You were slain.” The fact that He died, but more than that, the reason for His death. “And You purchased.” The word means to secure the rights to someone by paying a price. It was specifically used of purchasing slaves in the slave market and setting them free. The same Greek word is used in 1 Corinthians 6:20 of us. “You have been bought with

a price." You have been purchased, verse 9, says, "for God." God is the intended beneficiary. Ever thought about that? Your salvation is not primarily about you. It's primarily about God. You have been purchased for God. Isn't that what Paul goes on to say in 1 Corinthians 6? He says you have been bought with a price. He says, therefore, you are not your own. You don't belong to you anymore. No, you belong to God. "You have purchased for God with Your blood." There's the price Christ had to pay and, of course, as I've noted for you, everywhere in the scripture blood refers to the sacrificial death of an animal, in the Old Testament, or of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. 1 Peter 1:18-19:

You were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

"You have purchased for God with Your blood," verse 9 says, "men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation." This describes who was purchased by the sacrifice of Christ. Now, these four terms in verse 9 occur five times in Revelation, although in different order. Tribe refers to those who are united by a family, lineage. Tribe is a clan. You're united by family. Tongue describes those united by a common language. People describes those who are united by the same basic genetic makeup, or as we use the term race today. Nation describes those united in the same political structure. Robert L Thomas writes in his commentary, "people of every lineage, language, race, and political orientation are represented in this broad company of the beneficiaries of Christ's redemption." You know, I love the fact that we can go anywhere on this planet and interact with believers and it doesn't matter, any of those things. They are our brothers and sisters in Christ the moment we meet them, right? We know that and we respond to them and they to us because we share a common Lord. We share a common faith - all of those things that are recorded in Ephesians 4. That's what Jesus did. This is why He's worthy. Because He is redeeming a people. God is redeeming a people by His Son, for His Son, to His own glory. He's worthy.

And there's another reason He's worthy, not His death and the reason for His death alone, but also the results of His death. In verse 10, "you have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God." The redeemed together, all of us together, are a kingdom. We're the kingdom of God. In other words, we're those over whom God rules in a very personal way as our King. And individually, we are priests. We have immediate access to God. We have communion with God and, like the Old Testament priests, we have been given the ministry of reconciliation, reaching out to others to tell them about this God that we have come to know. So, we're a kingdom. We're priests. And verse 10 adds, "and they will reign upon the earth." In chapter 20, we learn that's going to be true during the millennium, during the thousand

years that Christ reigns on this renewed planet. And in 22:5, we learn that we will reign with Him forever in the eternal state. Believers will reign with Jesus Christ. Now, did you notice this new song doesn't say the Lamb is worthy because of who He intrinsically is, although that's true, but because of what He's done, because of the work of redemption. This is the song of the four living ones and the twenty-four elders.

Joining their song comes the angels in verses 11 and 12. Look at verse 11, "then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders." As this scene in Heaven unfolds, the camera lens widens to take in the full sweep of Heaven's glory, and the majesty of the One, sitting on the throne, and of the Lamb. They are surrounded in their glory by countless angels. Now, John uses two expressions here to capture the vast number. He says, "and the number of them." Literally, "the arithmetic" is the Greek word. It's the word from which we get our word arithmetic. The arithmetic of them was, "myriads of myriad's, and thousands of thousands." "Myriads of myriads" is literally "ten thousand times ten thousand." Ten thousand was the largest number for which many of the ancient peoples had a word. And so, ten thousand times ten thousand" was the square of that number. Literally, it's a hundred million angels. But there's more than that because John adds, "and thousands of thousands." In other words, it's not anti-climactic. He wants us to know that it's really an impossible number. It's more than one hundred million angels. Now, just think about that for a moment. One angel, in one night in the Old Testament killed 185,000 men. And there are a hundred million of them around the throne. The huge number of angels, the innumerable collection of angels, adds to the weight of this overwhelming, majestic vision of God. The angels join the praise of the rest of Heaven here and more than one hundred million angels join in the praise of Jesus Christ. Verse 12, "saying with a loud voice." Now, because this says "saying," some argue this means that angels are only speaking this praise, they're not singing. I have to disagree with that. I mean, if you look back in verse 9, it says that the redeemed sang a new song "saying." So, this could be a song as well, and I think it is. And notice, "they sang with a mega voice," literally. Like the mega voice of the angel who was crying out, "is anyone worthy." This huge throng sings this new song that echoes throughout the universe. Can I just stop and make a very direct applicational point here? Sing so you can be heard. When we sing praises to the Lord, sing to Him. Don't sing like you don't mean it. Sing like you mean it. And I'm especially just going to pick on you guys, and say, sing like men, all right? Don't be a wimp, for goodness sakes. Enough of that. It does challenge us, I think, to sing out with our whole hearts. This is literally "with a mega voice," it says they sang. Verse 12 goes on to say here's what they sang – "worthy is the Lamb that was slain." Again, the focus even of the angels is on the death of Jesus Christ. He's worthy. Why? He's worthy, "to receive

power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory and blessing.” Now don't misunderstand here. It's not saying Jesus doesn't have these things and that God's about to give them to them or to Him or, even worse, that somehow, we're going to give them to Him. No. In fact, the New Testament teaches that these qualities already belong to Christ. I could take you to passages - I put them up there on the slide - to show you passages where it says Christ already has these things. These are all qualities He already possesses and for which He is worthy to be praised. Think about what this is saying. Jesus has inherent power. He has incomparable and all-sufficient riches. He has incomparable wisdom. He has irresistible might. He has honor - that is His exalted position of authority. He has glory - that's His transcendent majesty. And He has God's blessing. This is what He possesses in the mind of God. And for all of those things, Heaven is singing the praises of the Lamb. This is what He has, and this is why He deserves to be praised.

Joining the praise of all the redeemed and of all of that huge angelic host, is the entire universe in verses 13 and 14. Verse 13, “and every created thing which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things in them.” This is a lot like Psalm 150:6, “let everything that has breath praise the LORD!” That's exactly what's happening here. Mounce writes, “all creation gives praise, honor, glory, and power to God and to the Lamb. John hears the roar of the adulation as it rises to Heaven. It is the adoration of the entire created world. The universality of Christ's great redemptive work calls for a universal response.” Verse 13 says, “and I heard all of creation saying.” Every intelligent being in the universe. I think this probably includes fallen angels and unredeemed humanity as well, because remember, “every knee will bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord.” Every intelligent being in the universe joins in this great hymn of praise - praise that's directed, notice in verse 13, “to Him who sits on the throne (that's the Father) and to the Lamb.”

And, to them both, they say, may there be, “blessing, and honor, and glory, and dominion.” This doxology contains four elements, rather than the same seven in the previous one. It repeats three elements from the one we just looked at but it changes one word. It changes the word “might” to the word “dominion” - a word that doesn't talk about inherent power, but power exercised. Dominion is sovereignty. That's the idea. So, every created thing declares that the Father and the Lamb are worthy to be praised and to exercise, in addition to what They already possess,

They're to be praised for Their dominion, for their sovereignty, literally verse 13 says, “into the ages of the ages.” Think about that expression for a moment. “Into the ages of the ages.” Forever. As far as your mind can think. You know, I often challenged my kids when they were younger to think about eternity

past or think about eternity future. Go back as far as your mind can go into eternity past, to the vanishing point and God was there. And He always was. What this is saying is if you take the same exercise and you go out into eternity future, as far as your mind can go, until you end up a sobbing puddle on the floor and God's praise will still continue. "Into the ages of the ages."

Verse 14 says, "and the four living creatures kept saying, 'amen.'" Probably, they were repeating, "amen," after each of the seven descriptions of praise. "To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing (Amen), and honor (amen), and glory (amen), and dominion or sovereignty (amen)"

And verse 14 finishes, "and the elders fell down and worshipped." When Christ takes the title deed to the earth from the hand of the Father, all the redeemed will fall down before the Lamb and before the One who sits on the throne in humility, in submission, and in worship. The praise of this chapter, friends, is the praise that is a genuine outpouring of adoring hearts, full of love and praise for all that God has done through the Lamb.

So, what is the chief lesson for us in this magnificent 5th chapter? There are a lot of lessons. I've tried to point out a few along the way, but there's one primary lesson. Listen to how Mounce puts it, "Chapter 5 has revealed a central truth that governs the entire book of Revelation. By His sacrificial death the Lamb has taken control of the course of history and guaranteed its future. He alone was worthy to break the seals and open the scroll. The hosts of heaven break out in jubilant song honoring the redemptive work of the Lion who is the Lamb. His triumphant sacrifice has transformed men and women from every part of the universe into priests in the service of God. Countless angels circle His throne and declare His power and praise. This vision of the grandeur of the triumphant Lamb prepares John to share with his readers the more solemn aspects of the judgments that lie in the future. A vivid portrayal of the One who has won the crucial battle against sin supplies the confidence that in the troubled times to come there remains a hope that is steadfast and sure." He is the Lion who is the Lamb. He is in control.

Here's the point I want you to get from chapter 5: the end of human history will not be the product of random chance or fate. It has already been written. And that future will be carried out by the One it was planned by, the One that's under the control of, and that was delegated to Him by the Father. It's the only one in the universe who is worthy. It is our Lord Jesus Christ. Folks, this is the end of the story and the One who controls it is the one who purchased you for God by His blood. He's not going to let any of His own be lost and He's going to bring it all to fruition. We're going to see it unfold. He's going to judge. The wrath of the Lamb is coming but He's going to protect His own and He's going to bring all of human

history to its culmination. And then He will establish His kingdom, a thousand years on this planet, and then He will destroy this universe and create a new one in which righteousness is at home and you and I will live on a new earth forever with the Lamb who was slain. And we will sing His praises into the ages of the ages. That's our hope. Don't lose sight of that in your life or in the circumstances, the world in which we live. He is worthy to take the scroll and to break its seals. Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for this magnificent chapter. We feel that we should take off our shoes because we're on holy ground. We thank You for the privilege of seeing the process by which You identify and exalt the only One who is worthy to take the title deed to the earth and to take back this planet from its usurpers, and to establish His reign forever. Thank you, Father, that we know Him. - the Lion, who is also the Lamb slain for us. We thank You in His name. Amen.