

Worthy is the Lamb

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[0 : 00] Over the past couple weeks, we've been reflecting on the truth from God's Word that He is worthy of praise, worthy of our worship. And that's really the reason why we've started services up again, even with the restrictions that we have.

Because our God is worthy. He deserves our praise and our worship. And we've looked at a number of different reasons over the past couple weeks. And this morning, we're going to bring this series to a close and look at one final reason.

And we're going back to Revelation. We're going to see it through the eyes of John in his spectacular vision that the Lord Jesus gave him when he was on the island of Patmos.

So if you have your Bible, we're going to just kind of work through it bit by bit. And so you can follow along there. And I'll try to...we've got some technical difficulties here, but we'll try to manage.

We've got some stuff on the screen too. And... This is where we are in this moment. And this is, of course, an artist's rendition of what John saw in his vision.

[1 : 16] We talked about this two weeks. He was called up into heaven in the Spirit, in this vision. And there he saw something like this.

He saw one seated on the throne who was radiant and beautiful. Four living creatures and 24 elders, kings with crowns. And there was worship going on in heaven.

And we're going to continue on a little bit with this vision and just see what John saw in his vision next. In chapter 5, verse 1.

Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals.

So all of a sudden, this worship moment, something happens. John notices that there's a scroll in the hand of the one who is seated on the throne.

[2 : 18] And not just any scroll, but a scroll with writing on both sides. A scroll with seven seals. This is another artist's depiction of maybe something like what he saw.

And of course, John is probably wondering, just as we are, well, what is the scroll? What's written on it? What's the meaning of this?

Why are there these seals on it? Well, we're going to get to that in a moment. But let's keep going and hear what John saw. Verse 2.

And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?

But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside.

[3 : 19] So as John is watching, a mighty angel comes in a loud voice, not just once, but the sense here is that continuously he is proclaiming, Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?

It's time to open the scroll. And the sense we get is that this call, this invitation to open the scroll, goes out not just in heaven, but to the whole universe, to the ends of the universe.

No one in heaven or on earth or under the earth, in all of creation, was found who is able to open the scroll, to read its contents.

And so this moment of worship and praise all of a sudden takes a turn of sadness. And John, he says, I wept. I was weeping. Not just crying, but weeping because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll.

But his sadness is interrupted in verse 5 as one of the elders turns to him and speaks to him and says this, Do not weep.

[4 : 36] See or behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.

Don't weep, John. There is someone who is worthy to open the scroll. And he gives two titles of the one who is worthy, the one who is able to do it.

One of them harkens back to a prophecy given long ago by Jacob to his son Judah. Judah. Jacob said this, Judah, your brothers will praise you.

Your hand will be on the neck of your enemies. Your father's son will bow down to you. You are a lion's cub, Judah. You return from the prey, my son. Like a lion, he crouches and lies down.

Like a lioness, who dares to rouse him? And then these words, wonderful words. The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come, and the obedience of the nations shall be his.

[6 : 02] This promise of a great king made long ago, a lion descended from Judah. He also refers to the root of David.

David, these words harken back to the prophecy of Isaiah. In Isaiah chapter 11. A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse.

From his roots, a branch will bear fruit. And it goes on to describe how the spirit of the Lord will be upon him, and how he will judge and bring righteousness and peace to the earth.

Another wonderful promise. This is the one. And of course, we know who he is talking about. He's talking about Jesus. This is the one that the angel proclaimed would be born to Mary.

Well, the vision goes on. In Revelation chapter 5.

[7 : 04] The elder says, Behold the lion, or see the lion, the root of David. He has triumphed.

He's able to open the scroll. And it's seven seals. And you almost get the sense that he's gesturing. Behold, look. In that moment, John looks.

And this is what he sees. Verse 6. Then I saw a lamb looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.

The lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. This is one artist's rendition of it.

It's not really in the throne scene, but you kind of get the idea. Seven horns and seven eyes. A very strange vision, looking as if it had been slain.

[8 : 04] There's another artist's rendition of it. In this one, the lamb is standing, wearing the crown of thorns there. So, even as we hear John say this, I mean, we should be thinking, this is not an ordinary lamb.

This is a vision. This is almost like a dream, like some of the visions that were given long ago to Daniel and Ezekiel, to Pharaoh, that Joseph interpreted for him.

So, there's this lamb, and there's details about it that he highlights, looking as if it had been slain. It's not dead anymore, though, because it's standing.

And it's got seven horns and seven eyes. And he explains a little bit about that. From there, the vision goes on.

John says, And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the lamb.

[9 : 15] Each one had a harp, and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. And they sang a new song, saying, You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain.

And with your blood, you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.

So, even at the taking of this scroll by this lamb, heaven bursts into worship.

The 24 elders, the four living creatures, they begin to sing this song of praise to the lamb. From there, the worship service seems to grow in size.

Verse 11, Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.

[10 : 24] In a loud voice, they were saying, Worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise.

You can just imagine what this might have seemed like to John. What this would have looked like. I imagine it's something like maybe stepping out into a stadium full of a hundred thousand people, except more.

There were myriads of myriads of angels all over the place. Can you imagine the sound of them singing these words? What a moment that must have been.

But it doesn't stop there. The worship service gets even bigger. Verse 13, Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea and all that is in them saying, To him who sits on the throne and to the lamb be praise and honor and glory and power forever and ever.

The four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped. What a moment.

[11 : 42] What a sight. What a sound. I wish that I could have seen with my own eyes what John saw in this vision. A spectacular worship service in heaven.

Now what does this vision mean? Here's the big question. And of course, this is the book of Revelation. This is one of the most debated, discussed pieces of the Bible that there is.

And there's all kinds of different ideas and opinions and interpretations. And if you come to a different one than me in your reading or your study of it, I bless you.

I would rather that you read this book and love it and treasure these words of God and interpret it a different way than not read them at all and just agree with whatever I say.

But what does this vision mean? What's going on here? What are we to take from this? Well, let's look at the first element of this vision, the scroll.

[12 : 49] What does the scroll represent? I thought I had a picture of it there.

Maybe not. Thanks, David. So there's this scroll. We want to know what is this scroll all about?

What does it mean? And even at the outset here, I think we can cross off a few things. In Revelation 4, verse 1, we read about how John was first invited to come up to heaven to witness this vision.

Come up here and I will show you what must take place after this. So the sense we get is that this is not a vision of what's happening in heaven right now. This is not the present.

This is what's going to come later or after that John sees. And from there, we can also probably rule out this is not really a depiction of what things in heaven actually look like.

[14 : 03] And we kind of get that sense all throughout this book, but especially here in this passage, we see some elements of it that, okay, this is strange. John kind of gives us the clue that this is a vision.

This is almost like a dream and there are various elements to this dream and details that have meaning. They represent something. And he actually interprets some of those for us.

He kind of gives us the meaning. Like in verse 6, the Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes and those seven eyes, he tells us, represent the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

And we kind of know that this vision is full of representative things and not necessarily actual depictions. We know that the Lamb is Jesus, the Son of God, the God-man.

And he doesn't look like this. It's in the vision. that he looks like this. And those details of how he appears to John are significant. They correspond to reality, but they're not the actual depictions.

[15 : 14] Again, we see this in verse 8 where the kings, the 24 elders, are holding golden bowls full of incense. And John tells us that those bowls, they represent the prayers of God's people.

So, I think those are kind of the guiding things that can kind of lead us towards how we're to read this. It's not as though we're seeing a video clip of what will happen actually in the future.

It's more of a vision or a dream that God has given in which all of the details correspond to realities that we will see come about in the future.

And so, let's look at, let's consider the scroll. Back to the scroll. what does the scroll represent?

Well, if we continue reading in this vision, we see that the scroll represents, in a moment, the Lamb, in verse, chapter 6 and 7, we're not going to read it, but He will come and actually open the seals and open the scroll and we assume read it.

And as He opens each seal, some kind of event is triggered or something is unleashed either on earth or in heaven or something that relates to both.

[16 : 34] And so, we might, it seems like the scroll represents God's decree, God's written kind of ahead of time account of the final chapter of human history, of how things are going to unfold, especially as it pertains to the final judgment and to the final salvation of God's people.

And we kind of get this sense as we come to the opening of the sixth seal at the end of chapter 6.

The people there are calling out to the mountains, fall on us and hide us from the face 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 can withstand it?

So the opening of these seals seems to be the triggering of events, the setting in motion of what God has ordained from long ago to bring forth the final judgment, the wrath of God.

These seals seem to trigger the events that either themselves are part of the day of the Lord or lead up to the day of the Lord depending on how you want to see it.

But it's not all judgment and punishment. Chapter 7 goes on as the seventh seal is opened and we get descriptions of salvation. We get descriptions of how some of God's people are sealed to protect them from the judgment that is about to be poured out.

[18:08] And we see a snapshot of a multitude in heaven singing about the salvation of God, the great deliverance of God in the midst of all of this.

And so that's kind of how I would take the scroll. It seems as though it is kind of the last chapter of the story. It's sealed up. It's already planned.

And there is only one who is worthy to initiate the unfolding of that chapter and the reading of it into human history.

And one who is worthy to carry forward the events that are there. The final judgment and the final salvation of God's people. Well, there's the scroll, and then the next most, and the most important detail of this vision is not the scroll, but the lamb.

The lamb, when he comes into this vision, just takes the whole spotlight, and it's almost as if after he takes the scroll, the scroll just kind of fades into the background.

[19:16] We've got to put that on hold for a moment, we've got to have a worship service here, because this one is worthy. And it's a worship service, as we looked at, that starts in heaven, and it just grows from there until the whole universe in John's vision is praising this lamb, this one.

Why are they praising him? What are they saying? they're saying, you are worthy. Verse 9, you are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals.

Verse 12, worthy is the lamb. Verse 13, to the lamb be praise and honor and glory and power forever and ever.

You deserve it. It belongs to you. It's only right that we praise you and worship you. Why? We've looked at a number of reasons already in this series, but what's the reason that they give here in this heavenly worship service that John sees?

Verse 9, you are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals. Why? Because you were slain and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.

[20:42] you have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God and they will reign on the earth. So there are many reasons that he is worthy, but the one that shines bright right at the beginning of this is the reason that he was slain, the reason that he died, that through his death and the shedding of his blood, he purchased, he bought, he paid the ransom to set a people free, a people from every tribe and nation and tongue.

He paid the price that was required so that a great people from all over the earth could be set free from the debt that they owed God from their guilt for their sins.

Not only were they ransomed or purchased, set free from, but they were purchased to. Do you see that word? Some translations say purchased for.

With your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and tongue. It's not just to set them free from the negative consequence, but it's to buy them and bring them back into relationship with God to be a people for him, who live with him and enjoy him.

And he is their God and they are his people. And it goes on from there. Not only that, but verse 10, you have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God.

[22:40] This is a picture of John, what John saw at the beginning of this vision because Jesus is not still dead. He is alive.

This is not a song of his sacrifice and death and that's the end. This is a song of his triumph of what he has accomplished through his death.

and his resurrection. Verse 10, you made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God. We often think of that word kingdom in terms of a location, a place with boundaries.

God. But as we read these words, it seems that what they are saying is that the kingdom is primarily, first and foremost, a people.

It's a people whom Jesus, the Lamb, has won for God and to God. We almost get the sense here that Jesus is offering a gift to God.

[23 : 53] I have gone out, I have gone into the world and I have won for you. I have established, I have brought back into order your kingdom in this world which has rebelled.

I have made them priests who will worship you appropriately. And this kingdom, these people, these priests are people from every tribe and language and people and nation.

It's not just a kingdom up in heaven, it is the kingdom established from heaven. But look at the last verse of the song in verse 10, they will reign, on the earth.

A kingdom on earth. All of this reasons why the lamb is worthy and why heaven explodes in praise and after that the angelic host joins in and then the universe joins in.

Look at what he has done. And he didn't do it with a sword. Convert or die. No.

[25 : 07] No. He did it by lovingly laying down his life, by taking the bullet for this people, by jumping on the grenade to save this people.

He is worthy because he has saved us by his blood. God, this is the ultimate reason why we worship.

This will be the reason for all eternity that one of the big ones at the heart of our worship forever, this one, our great king, laid down his life for us so that we could become a part of this great kingdom that we will enjoy forever.

He is worthy of our worship. He is worthy of our praise. Sunday after Sunday after Sunday and forever, day after day, not just here at church when we sing, but in each of our lives as we go about the various parts of our day, he is worthy of our praise.

So I want to invite the worship team to come forward again and we're going to sing one final song to the lamb, to our God.

[26 : 32] Amen. Amen.