

The Lamb is Worthy

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- [0:00] It would be great if you could turn in your Bibles back to Revelation chapter 5 as we resume our series through this book. It's page 1240 in the Black Pew Bibles, Revelation chapter 5.
- Well, only in Victoria do you get a public holiday for a footy final. I wonder if you watched the game yesterday. No, yes, no.
- For those who did watch the game, I wonder which team was worthy of your applause or praise. Was it the team that won or was it neither team because they weren't the team you grew up with or they weren't a Melbourne home team?
- In fact, for many Melburnians yesterday, it was a bit of a downer because there was no Melbourne team in the footy final. Because for many Melburnians, that's what makes a team worthy of praise and support in life.
- In fact, when I moved from Sydney to Melbourne, a bishop told me that I had to pick a Melbourne team. I was not allowed to barrack for the Sydney Swans.
- [1:05] And after yesterday, I can see why. And so is it winning or being our home team or a Melbourne team that makes them worthy of our applause and allegiance in life?
- Of course, for others, footy is not their thing. They prefer soccer or rugby, wherever Chris is, or a completely different hobby. But what makes something worthy of our praise or applause, our time or allegiance in life?
- Well, today we'll see that above all others, Jesus, the Lamb, is worthy of our praise and our lives. Why? Well, as we'll see, because he was slain.
- But before we get to that, let me give you a brief overview of this weird but wonderful book that we're picking up. In chapter 1, John saw an awesome vision of Jesus, which we looked at last year.
- And then Jesus told John to do this on the screen, chapter 1, verse 19. Write, John, therefore what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.
- [2:16] And I think this verse is not a bad summary of the broad structure of the book. So chapters 1 to 3 is about what John has seen.
- He has seen the risen Jesus when he originally rose from the dead. He even saw the glorified Jesus at the transfiguration, not to mention the vision that he just saw before.
- And he has seen different churches like the seven churches that he has to write to. He has seen churches face persecution and pressure from our world.
- And he has even seen some, sadly, compromise their allegiance to Christ. And so he has to write what he has seen. That's chapters 1 to 3. And then chapters 4 and 5 is what is now, where John is called up to the throne room of heaven, which is like the bridge on a massive ship.
- It's the control room of the universe. And there in this room at the controls is God on the throne ruling.

[3 : 23] And as we'll see today, the lamb. And then chapters 6 to 22, which is the rest of the book, are about what will take place later. But do realize this is from John's perspective 2,000 years ago.

And so some of what must take place later for John is happening now for us. It's God's plan for our world, both for us now and for our future, which is what the scroll in our chapter is actually all about.

So point one in your outlines and verse one in your Bibles or on the screen for those online. John writes, Now, we're still in the control room of the universe.

And so he who is seated on the throne is God Almighty, whom we saw in chapter 4. And in God's hand, therefore, is a scroll with writing on both sides.

In other words, it's full of words. It also has seven seals. And again, in Revelation, numbers are symbolic. And seven, as you probably already know, is God's number.

[4 : 47] It's the perfect number. And so this is this scroll is sealed by God. Seven seals are sealed by God and full of words from God.

But words about what? Well, the future of our world. With judgment of sin and evil, plus the preservation and vindication of God's people.

How do we know this? Well, the Old Testament supports this. For example, Ezekiel chapter 2 on the screen. He is given a similar scroll with writing on both sides.

And a concerned judgment for Israel's sin and evil, lament, mourning and woe. But more than that, John has just been told in chapter 4 to come up to the throne room.

And he will be shown what must take place after this. After he's seeing the throne room. What is now? And spoiler alert, when the scroll is opened next week and the following weeks, we will see that it does concern the judgment of sin and evil, plus the preservation and vindication of God's people.

[6 : 03] It concerns what is happening now and our future. That's how we know what this scroll is about. It's a bit like a Roman will in John's day.

Roman wills gave directions about what would happen to the future of their estate, much like our wills happen today. And it was sealed, though, by witnesses who watched the person write the will and then they put their wax seal on the scroll.

And so if there were seven seals, then the will would have looked a bit like this. There were seven seals for the seven witnesses. And then once the person died, the executor, who had the authority to carry out the will, would break the seals and execute the plans, implement them, carry them out.

Though here the scroll probably looked a bit more like this one, where each page was sealed separately. Because as we'll see next week, each seal is broken one at a time.

Though in reality, the contents of each seal happen at the same time in our world. What's more, God did not die like in Romans' wills.

[7 : 15] He's ruling on the throne, right? Rather, he is the one who sealed it. Seven seals, it's God's seal. But the question is, who will open it?

Who will be the executor of the estate? Who will carry out the plans? Who will implement God's will? That's the question in verse 2, verse 2 to 4.

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. John weeps and weeps, or literally he weeps loudly because there seems to be no one worthy.

No one worthy to open the scroll and to implement God's plan. And John weeps loudly, not because, you know, his curiosity won't be satisfied, he won't find out what will happen, but rather because God's word to judge evil and vindicate his people won't be carried out.

[8:28] In other words, he weeps because there's no hope. In two weeks' time is our Melbourne Anglican Synod, which is like the Anglican Church Parliament.

And like watching our federal parliament, it is not very exciting. And so last year I was looking forward to a coffee during the break, a real coffee from downstairs.

That was my hope, which would help me persevere through the rest of it. But when I got there, there was no one worthy to operate the coffee machine. And so I felt like weeping loudly.

Of course, for John, it's much more serious, isn't it? He, along with the church, faced a level of persecution and pressure from our world that we often don't.

But others do. Like Christians in Nigeria, where just two weeks ago a church was attacked, three were killed, 30 abducted, and to my knowledge still have not yet been released.

[9:36] And it's happening all over the world. And so they, like John, need to know God's word for our world to give us all hope and therefore help to keep persevering.

This is why John weeps so loudly when there seems to be no one worthy. But there is one. Point two, verse five. Then one of the elders said to me, do not weep.

See the lion of the tribe of Judah. The root of David has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.

The elder says there is one who can open the scroll for he has triumphed. And notice, by the way, when it says triumph, it doesn't actually say over what, does it?

It just says he has triumphed full stop. The implication being that he has triumphed over all. Over sin and death, over evil and the devil, over every power and authority.

[10:41] Which, as we'll see, is by his blood. But also notice, it's past tense, isn't it? He has triumphed. In other words, he has already won.

And so while we'll still need to live through persecution and pressure from our world, we can know that in the end, we will win. Given that it was the footy final yesterday, it's like Jesus is the team captain who has already kicked a million goals.

And so even the game has to go on, the outcome is guaranteed. In fact, for those who watched it, it was a bit like the Brisbane Lions yesterday. The game still hadn't finished and they were already celebrating because they were double the score ahead.

And so the outcome of the game was guaranteed. Now, of course, evil may still kick some goals during that time in the remainder of the game.

Not that I'm calling the swans evil, by the way, but anyway. The evil may still kick some goals during that time, like changing laws to target Christians. I was at a meeting at the end of last year, I think it was, and one of the school principals was sharing how a lot of the principals here in Victoria, the Christian school principals, met with our state government, and they spoke about how a Christian school is a community of Christians.

[12:11] And so even gardeners need to be Christian. Then the government wrote a law specifically mentioning how it would be illegal to demand gardeners be Christians.

They took their exact answer and put it and made it illegal in the law. Now, I don't know if it's actually coming to be. I'm not sure what this anti-discrimination law is up to at the moment. But the point is, evil may still kick some goals.

Yet Jesus has already won the game for us. And so he's already worth following in life, isn't he? And because Jesus has already won, he's declared to be the Messiah or the king, the winner or ruler over all.

That's who the root of David refers to, the Davidic king, the Messiah, the Christ. And that's what the Lion of Judah refers to, as we heard in our first reading.

The king from whom the scepter would not depart. He is the true Lion King, as opposed to this Lion King.

[13:17] Disney's Lion King has triumphed at the theatre, and it's still breaking records, did you realise? Just last year, it grossed \$4.3 million in one week on Broadway.

Can you believe that? That was Broadway's highest weekly gross in history, and that's after the musical running for 26 years already.

But this Lion King here in Revelation 5 has triumphed. Not over Broadway by his musical for 26 years, but over all by his blood for an eternity of years.

And we know that it's by his blood that he has triumphed and declared king, because that's what John sees next. He sees a lamb that was slain, verse 6. Then I saw a lamb looking as if it had been slain, standing at the centre of the throne, encircled by 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. John sees a lamb looking as though it had been slain.

[14:32] Here is the blood of Jesus. And because he was slain, he now stands at the centre of the throne, ruling over all.

And we know it's God's throne because it's also surrounded by the living creatures and elders, just like God's throne was in chapter 4. What's more, this lamb has seven horns.

Remember, seven is God's perfect number, and horns in the Old Testament represent power, strength. And so he has God's seven power, horns.

He also has seven eyes. God's seven sight, which actually means God's knowledge. Because if you see all, then you know all, don't you?

He has God's knowledge because, verse 6, he has God's spirit. The seven eyes, we're told, are the seven spirits sent into all the earth.

[15:37] Seven spirits, seven God, spirit, Holy Spirit, right? So he has God's knowledge and wisdom because he has God's spirit who sees all the earth. This is what God had promised in the Old Testament, isn't it?

In places like Isaiah 11, where the Messiah would come from the line of Jesse and David, the root of David, and notice verse 2, the spirit of the Lord will rest on him and give him wisdom, understanding, knowledge, strength, power, might, all that sort of thing.

In fact, it's very interesting that the spirit has seven qualities in that verse 2 as well. A coincidence? The point is, because Jesus, the lamb, was slain at the cross, he has already won and so rules on God's throne with God's power, wisdom, and spirit.

It's like he's not just the best player on the team who has already kicked a million goals and guaranteed the outcome of the game, but he's also the chairman of the AFL board who rules over every game, who has the power to even overturn the results of games.

And so we can be even more certain we will win in the end. In fact, we can be even more certain than that because Jesus also holds the future of our world in his hands.

[17:03] You see, by his blood, he's not only won and rules, but he's also worthy to open that scroll. Verse 7, He, the lamb, went and took the scroll from the right hand of him, God, who sat on the throne.

And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the lamb. 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. And you have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God and they will reign on the earth.

You see, because Jesus was slain for us, he is worthy to open that scroll. Remember the scroll of God's word for our world and to implement it, implement God's plan.

[18:07] And to break the seals and to execute God's plan. And so the future of our world is now in his hands. Which means we can be even more certain we'll win in the end.

So he's not just the best player who's already kicked a million goals and so already won the game for us. And he's not just the chairman or the king who rules over every game, but he's also the ref who controls the game.

Whose cause won't be dodgy, like perhaps some yesterday were, but will be fair and ensure the future judgment of sin and evil plus the preservation and vindication of God's people.

Our future is secure. We can be absolutely certain that we will win in the end. I heard a story about Bishop Desmond Tutu who was the Archbishop of Cape Town in South Africa for a long time.

He passed away only in 2021 actually. Apparently though, while he was preaching one day during the time of apartheid, soldiers came into the church. They kind of lined the walls around the congregation and pointed their guns at the people.

[19:19] And instead of cowering behind the pulpit or demanding to know why they were there, Archbishop Tutu actually welcomed them and then he held up his Bible and said to them, just so you know, I've read the end of this book and we win.

Isn't that good? You see, Jesus the Lamb has already won and rules on God's throne. He is the one who's worthy to open the scroll and implement God's plan and so he holds the future in his hands which means no matter what pressure or persecution we face in this world, we will win in the end.

And so Jesus is certainly worth following with our lives, isn't he? In fact, he has already purchased or ransomed us from sin for God, verse 9 and 10, to be his precious people and priests, to serve God by following him.

That's how we serve God is by following Jesus. And the cost of our redemption was his blood. Is there not even more reason that Jesus is worthy of our lives?

In fact, as we saw, it's by his blood he has triumphed, it's by his blood he has declared king, it's by his blood he's worthy to open the scroll, it's all by his blood as the slain lamb.

[20:48] It's why Jesus continues to be called the lamb in this chapter rather than the lion. It's why the Lord's Supper focuses not on Jesus' miracles or even his resurrection, although it's implied, it focuses on his death.

It's why we hear it, hey, should he keep going on about it because his death remains central. So we should never grow tired of hearing it, pondering it, sharing it, nor praising him for it.

And more briefly, point three, verse 11. Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels numbering thousands upon thousands and 10,000 times 10,000 that were encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.

Back in chapter 4, God was praised by the living creatures and the 24 elders only. But now, the lamb is about to be praised by even more, by thousands upon thousands of angels.

There's this crescendo of praise, you see, that runs from chapter 4 through to chapter 5. And here it rises to include 10,000 times 10,000 angels.

[22:06] Why? Well, again, because the lamb was slain. Verse 12, in a loud voice, they were saying, worthy is the lamb who was slain.

Receive, not just power, the seven horns and wealth, and not just wisdom, the seven eyes and strength, but also honour and glory and praise.

all because he was slain. Do you see how central the death of Jesus is? How it makes him worthy not only to open the scroll, worthy not just of our lives, but also our praise.

Of course, it's hard to imagine hearing this, though George Frederick Handel has tried with his Messiah musical, take a listen. Thank you.

Pretty impressive, but I think this, 10,000 times 10,000 angels, what's the maths on that? I can't work it out. That's even more impressive, isn't it?

[23:38] And this praise continues to build until it's not just every creature in heaven, but every creature everywhere. Verse 13 and 14.

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea and all that in them is saying to him who sits on the throne, God the Father, and to the Lamb, be praise and honour and glory and power forever and ever.

The four living creatures said amen and the elders fell down and worshipped. Here is the crescendo of praise that rises to a climax with every creature praising both Jesus the Lamb and God the Father.

and I say will happen because we don't yet see every creature on earth doing this, do we?

We don't see every person praising Jesus the Lamb and God the Father yet, do we? But we will on the last day when every knee should bow and notice in heaven and on the earth and under the earth the same language and every tongue confess that the Lamb is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

[25:00] On that day every creature will praise Jesus the Lamb and God the Father. And since the Lamb has already won and rules and holds the future of our world in his hands, this too is also certain.

So certain that verse 13 is written in the present tense even though it's yet not yet happened. Of course on that day you can either bow with your life and praise with your lips willingly or unwillingly.

On that day you will either reign on earth with Christ or face the judgment of Christ. And it all depends on whether you believe in Christ and so do you.

Whether you are here in the room or online at home. He is worthy of your belief you know. For he was slain for your sin and by his blood he has already won and rules and holds the future of the world in his hands.

So while this life won't always be easy as we'll see in the coming weeks we will win in the end and reign in the world to come. It's worth believing in Jesus and so do you.

[26:11] And for us who do then realise afresh that Jesus is worthy of our lives. And so do you serve him above all else? And does he have our allegiance above all others?

You know do we serve him above our work or holidays our money or family our health our desires? Do we continue to trust him even when we face persecution or pressure in life?

Or perhaps in our case the demands or busyness of our lives? Jesus is worthy of our lives and he is worthy of our praise. So will we sing his praise in church even if we're not into singing as much as others?

And will we pray his praises during the week when we're not with others? And will we name him during the week as our Lord and Saviour in front of others?

And will we speak of him to others? Jesus the Lamb is worthy. He is worthy of our lives and he is worthy of our praise and so let's praise him now by going