

The Lamb Slain from the Foundation of the World

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[0 : 00] I would like you to take your Bibles this morning and turn in them to Revelation chapter 5. How many of you are into cold chills?

! I mean, you know, you get that little, just undeserved little rush of emotion on occasion. How many of you have those? Some of us leave, kind of let, you know, we run on a very straight line.

I mean, everything's kind of mellow all the time, but others of us, it's like, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, you know. Anyway, I'm into cold chills, and I can't help but reflect on the passage this morning and the emotion that it has elicited in my own heart in study and in prayer as we think about the conclusion to this year, and we frame the Christmas story with communion.

I want you to turn to this passage in Revelation chapter 5, and I want you to follow along with me as I begin reading there in chapter 5, verse 1, and we will carry down to verse 8.

Revelation chapter 5, verse 1. And I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll.

[1 : 38] And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it. And I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.

And one of the elders said to me, weep no more. Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered so that he can open the scroll and the seven seals.

And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a lamb standing as though it had been slain with seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he'd taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the lamb, each holding a harp and a golden bowl full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

And they sang a new song, saying, worthy are you to take the scroll, to open the seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

[2 : 51] And you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth. Let us pray. Father God, this morning as we come again in prayer, we do so because we know that apart from you we can do nothing.

We're thankful for the blessing of being together this morning, and we're thankful in particular for the ministry of the indwelling spirit, for the blessing of being able to hold the word in our hand, for the privilege of being able to pray together that the word of God would have free course and that it would have an effect upon our lives, that our affections this morning would be stirred to glory in the Lord Jesus Christ and the sufficiency of His grace and salvation, that as we together consider Calvary and we consider what you have done for us, that our desires would be set on eternal things rather than things of this earth.

that our time around the table, taking the elements that remind us of our Savior's sacrifice for us, would stir our hearts to look forward to the day that we will see you face to face and be like you. that our thinking about you and our interest in the day in which we will see you would cause us to live a life that brings glory to your name.

So allow the word of God this morning and the work of the Spirit in the lives of your people to make a lasting difference.

[4 : 40] And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, as we take up the passage of Scripture this morning in Revelation chapter 5, we have to admit that one of the basic principles of Bible study is that we pay attention to context.

And context is always an important thing because it helps us frame the ministry of the Word of God and understand what we are actually looking at. And as we look at this passage this morning, I want you to kind of mark the fact that the book of Revelation is a book that kind of gives us a broad overview of the way in which the story ends.

It tells us, and at one point in the book of Revelation, John the Apostle pens these words that the book of Revelation talks about things that had happened, things that are happening, and things that will happen.

And so as we think about the book of Revelation, we understand that it is a wonderful and intriguing window through which God gives us a little picture into the future and helps us understand not only what the future is going to be about, but it really gives us a big picture of the grand theme of the whole Bible.

It tells us things that we need to pay attention to. And really, when you stop and think about what is the central theme of Scripture, without question, we would say without a hesitation, it's Jesus Christ, isn't it?

[6 : 01] He is the center of the story, and the entire Scripture revolves around Him. So I want you to understand that as we pick up here in chapter 5, we find that the first three chapters of the book of Revelation have been given to a large degree in giving explicit instructions to the seven churches regarding their spiritual state.

Following that, we have chapter 4 in which John the Apostle opens up and gives us a picture of the glory of heaven, and you would say in some sense that chapter 4 in particular is about God the Father.

Woven into that is the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the presence of the Holy Spirit. And then we come to chapter 5, and it begins in a very interesting way because we have a question that is posed by an angel to John the Baptist, or John, regarding, okay, who can open the scroll?

And the idea of having all of history kind of unfold in front of him, something that was dear to John's heart at the moment, he suddenly finds out that there is no immediate response to opening the scroll.

And how does he handle it? How does he handle it? What does it tell us happens in the Scripture? Here's an adult man who is doing what? He's not sniffing. He is what?

[7 : 23] He's sobbing. He's crying. Loudly. Why is it? Because of his interest and affection in seeing what God was going to do and seeing the glory of God, and here is this kind of path that he was on.

Suddenly it comes to a halt. And why did it happen that way in part? How many of you discovered that on occasion God has kind of brought a pause in the things that he's been doing in your life, and it actually amplifies what lies in front to a certain degree, doesn't it?

And here it plays out that way, that John, anticipating, hearing what was coming next, suddenly there's a pause. And when the pause is not immediately fulfilled or that question is not immediately fulfilled, it kind of amps up his emotion.

And in the backdrop of that, he really begins to sob until he is given some encouraging news. What is that news? You look there in the passage, and in Revelation chapter 5, it says, Weep no more, verse 5, because we want you to know that the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered, so he that he will open the scroll, and he's going to lay it all out before you.

When you hear those words, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, what kind of thoughts go through your mind with those words? Lion, tribe of Judah.

[8 : 44] You think about the Old Testament passages that speak about the coming Messiah and his power and his glory and his significance, and you're kind of struck by that, and this is exciting.

The one who's going to bring all of history to its culmination and is going to bring the power and glory of God to the forefront is going to be the lion. And yet we find that on the heels of that verbal announcement, then John is given insight that's rather stunning.

You look there, and it says, In between the throne, verse 6, and the four living creatures, now just imagine this, here's an announcement, don't cry, John, because the lion of the tribe of Judah is the one who's going to open the scroll.

Now, having heard that with his ears, he looks, and in verse 6 he says, And I saw a lamb standing as though it had been, what?

slain. He was slain. As I was praying and thinking through those words in particular, I had to stop and think that for the most part, the vast majority of you who are sitting here really have no idea

what goes into preparing food that comes from animals.

[10:12] You really don't understand what that word lamb slain means in a visual, visceral way. Because the truth of the matter is, I would venture to say there are very, very few of you that have ever slaughtered your own food.

Raise your hand if you have. Raise your hand. Get them up high. You've slaughtered your own food. It is a difficult process. Would you agree to me? How many would say, hey, when your mom said, go out there and catch that chicken and whop off its head, you thought, yes!

Chickens are easy compared to lambs. Do you understand that? How many of you have slaughtered anything larger than a chicken or a rabbit? Okay.

We got a couple goat killers in here. I can see it now. A couple. Mathea goats? Lambs? Yeah. It's a hard work, isn't it? Huh? Huh? And so here's this image.

John sees the lamb slain. And what he means by that is that he sees in this lamb the evidence of the fact that the lamb had been sacrificed.

[11:20] And the imagery must have been absolutely stunning. By the way, when you stop and think about the imagery of the book of Revelation, just off the top, what are some of the things that stand out to you?

I mean, the catastrophic things that happen in the book of Revelation are pretty stunning, aren't they? Fire from heaven, you know, blood up to the bridles of the horses.

You know, you think about all the people that are dying left and right. It's just, it's pretty graphic. And yet here, the most significant of all the images is not all that, but it's the lamb, the lamb, the lamb.

And I want you to understand that God wants us to remember for all eternity that our salvation cost his son his life as our sacrifice.

It's interesting to Mark that prior to the book of Revelation, Jesus is only mentioned four times as the lamb. One of them is in John chapter 1, verse 29, where John the Baptist sees Jesus and what does he say?

[12:26] Behold, the lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. Four times prior to the book of Revelation, we have Jesus spoken of as the lamb. And yet, and mark this because it's significant, in the book of Revelation, Jesus is spoken of 28 times as the lamb.

28 times as the lamb. That's stunning when you stop and put it together. And as you think about what is being said about the Lord Jesus Christ, it would seem that the thing that the Spirit of God wants us to understand when we think about Christ, in particular, in the scope of eternity, we remind ourselves of his sacrifice on our behalf.

Eternity is going to be a great place. Isn't it going to be? There will be no sorrow. There will be no tears. There will be no sickness. There will be no sadness. It's going to be a... How many of you, on occasion, think to yourself, I'd like to go now?

It's going to be great. But there, throughout all of history, when we look at the Lord Jesus Christ, we will look at a reminder of what he did to get us there.

And it's important. Well, I want you to take a minute and appreciate what this issue of Christ being our Lamb really communicates by appreciating this title in the light of Scripture.

[13:53] And so allow me to skip over what God did in providing a covering for Adam and Eve back in the Old Testament, in the book of Genesis, when he sacrificed animals and gave their skins to Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness and even step forward beyond Abraham's instruction to his...

or instruction regarding his son and his sacrifice. And I want you to move forward, if you will, to the book of Exodus, just in your thinking, and stop and consider what God said to Moses in relationship to the Passover Lamb and the sacrifice of that Lamb.

Let me summarize the Exodus passage for you this way. Each family was to choose a young lamb. Young. They were to take that lamb into their home and live with it for four days. Would it be easier to take a knife and slit the jugular of an animal that you just arbitrarily picked out of the room and did it in five minutes?

Or would it be harder to take that lamb into your house, have it live with you? Could you keep the kids from petting that lamb?

[15:18] Don't pet that lamb. It's dying in three days. Don't pet that lamb. It's got a day to live. Don't mess with that lamb. I mean... And after four days, that lamb died.

And that lamb's blood was put on the doorposts and over the lintel. As you work your way through the scriptures, you understand not only in the book of Exodus, but also in the book of Leviticus and Numbers and Deuteronomy, the issue of sacrifice was one in which the Old Testament saint, in particular, when he was engaged in sin offering, one of the things that actually he did was that he went and put his hand personally on the head of that sacrificial lamb.

And in doing so, he was recognizing that it was his sin that was the consequence that was causing the death of that animal. Very visceral.

Very emotional. Very personal. For you who have been involved and have been involved on occasion in killing an animal, I trust you never found pleasure in it.

It was difficult to do. It was necessary. I want you to imagine just what it was like to realize that the reason that little lamb was being sacrificed was because of your, are you listening, willful, intentional rebellion against God.

[16:58] So when you think about Jesus Christ, the lamb, I want you to play this forward in a very personal way by stopping and recognizing that the lamb was an innocent victim and was dying as a substitute in the Old Testament.

And so, when we think about Jesus as our lamb, I want you to understand that we are going to remember forever that God's lamb died in our place and as a substitute for our sins.

Do you understand that? In the scope of eternity, when I look at Jesus, I cannot separate the image that I see from the reality of what He has done for me.

And He will have that etched into my conscience and to my heart for all of eternity. I would propose to you that in eternity, there will be something in relationship to seeing to the lamb that is much, that is a blessing in comparison to our thinking today.

Our thinking about Christ as the lamb is very, very inconsistent up and down. Would you agree with me? How many of you confess that one of the things that frustrates you on occasion is how fleeting your appreciation and emotional affection are for Jesus?

[18:21] Right? I mean, some days it's hot, some days it's cold, some days you're caught up in Thanksgiving, and other days you're just as moody and as sour as they come, and you stop and think, man, well, when we think about Jesus in heaven, none of that up and down will be there.

It will be with a joy unfettered and unbridled, and we will enjoy Him forever, thinking about what He's done for us. He, our sacrifice, and the substitute for our sins.

As I said earlier, in the act of sacrifice, particularly in the burnt offering and the sin offering, the offerer had to lay his hand on the head of the sacrifice, and that act was a symbolic way of indicating the transfer of sin from the sinner to the sacrifice, and the act was also an admission of something else.

It was a recognition that someone else was going to die in your place, and so later on this morning when we take the cup, one of the things that we will be doing, we are admitting that Jesus died for us.

That cup is a reminder that you have salvation because of His blood. Going back to the imagery in the book of Exodus, you remember when the blood of sacrifice was sprinkled on the doorposts and the lintel.

[19:43] It was later sprinkled on the altar and once a year on the mercy seat. This sprinkling communicated the effect of the blood on sin. And I want to communicate several different passages or relate several different passages, kind of drive that point home.

What does blood do for sin? In Exodus chapter 12, verse 13, when God spoke to the nation of Israel regarding that night, He said, when I see the blood, I will pass over you.

And wherever blood was against the posts and the lintel, death did not come into that home.

I think about the passage in Hebrews chapter 9, verse 22, and I want you to go there just for a moment. You're there in Revelation, so turn back just a little bit to Hebrews chapter 9, verse 22.

2. The author of Hebrews makes a summary statement regarding the Old Testament sacrifice, and he says this, without the shedding of blood, there is no, what?

[20:53] Forgiveness. Why are your sins forgiven? Are they forgiven? Because you have done some nice things to kind of compensate for those bad things. I chuckle when I talk with individuals.

I have to confess that I don't laugh out loud. I think that would be inappropriate, but I kind of chuckle when I talk to people and say, well, how are your sins going to be accommodated for? Well, I'm hoping my good outweighs my bad.

It doesn't work that way. One sin against an infinitely holy God is infinitely offensive and your paltry little peanut effort doesn't amount to anything.

But the blood of Christ does. And here in Hebrews chapter 9, it says, without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness. And then mark what it says there in verse 26. As it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

By the sacrifice of himself. So when we think about Jesus as the slain lamb, forever in all of eternity, carrying the marks of his sacrifice, we must think of him as the sinless substitute for our sins who died in our place that we might have everlasting life.

[22 : 19] So I want you, as we come together on this thought, to kind of revel in his work on our behalf, to stop and just kind of flesh it out a little bit and think, well, just how significant is it that Jesus died for me?

I want you to recognize, for one, that the book of Revelation speaks about the fact that he was slain for us from before the foundation of the world. When did God plan his son's sacrifice?

How many of you would prefer that someone put a lot of effort into thinking about your Christmas present? Don't go there. I understand that. What happened before Amazon?

I can remember with my father, you know, it's father and son thing. We would go out, guess what night? Christmas Eve to shop. I mean, it's like dad in the last minute, it's like, ah, I've got to do this. He hated shopping. He hated it desperately. He passed on the genetic code. And, you know, so would you rather that someone rushed out? What happens when you buy Christmas Eve?

[23 : 28] It's generally panic buying and it's the leftovers on the shelves. How many of you understand that? And one of the things that Christmas Eve buying always cares for is that at least you keep the tag with it because you can curse the person with the responsibility of taking it back afterwards if they don't like it.

When was our salvation planned? Look in the Bible, if you will. Just go forward a little bit to Revelation chapter 13, verse 5. Revelation chapter 13, verse 5.

I want you to kind of chew on this passage a little bit. Revelation chapter 13, verse 5. How did I do that?

From before the foundation of the world, I am, I am, verse 7.

How do I get? Verse 8. Okay, there it is. And all who dwell on the earth will worship everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

[24 : 46] And by the way, so ask yourself the question when we sing that song, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, where does that come from? From this passage.

And I want you to recognize that what it is saying here is that Jesus, the plan for Christ's sacrifice in our stead was something that was foreordained.

It was planned before. It was planned before. That Jesus would die for my sins. He would die for your sins before I ever committed them.

He had me in mind when He died on the cross. All of us, our names written in the book of life.

I have to confess that it's hard to get our head around, isn't it? Stop and think about that. Not only was He slain from before the foundation of the world for us, but He was also slain specifically for our sins.

[25 : 45] Implicit in that holy title, the Lamb, is the idea that Jesus is our substitute. When I think about Him as the Lamb, when I see Him as the Lamb, I will be reminding myself that Jesus died in my place and it is worthy of consideration often.

Who is Jesus? He's the one who died in my place. Furthermore, as we mark the fact that we will see Him forever as the Lamb, every time we look on Him, we will see Him as the Lamb and we remind ourselves over and over again of our close relationship to the fact of what He has done for us even in our eternal existence.

I want you to turn ahead, if you will, to Revelation chapter 1, not 21. Revelation chapter 21 and I'm going to ask that you kind of follow with me as I read verses 1 through 7.

Revelation 21 verse 1 through 7. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and the sea was no more and I saw a holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them and they will be His people and God Himself will be with them as their God.

[27 : 10] He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away.

And He who was seated on the throne said, Behold, I am making all things new. Also He said, Write this down for these words are trustworthy and true.

And He said to me, It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end to the thirsty I will give from the spring of water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage that I will be His God and He will be my Son.

Now I want you to think through with me carrying from these verses here that we've already read forward on to the end of the chapter more or less and mark several different things.

For one, we find that He is our God and we are in relationship with Him and blessed because of that. That's what we found here in the first seven verses. But I want you to understand that also when we think about who we are in eternity, we will recognize ourselves in relationship to the Lamb because as it says there in verse 9, look at it, Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me saying, Come and I will show you what?

[28 : 31] The bride. Who's the bride? That's who we are. Isn't that right? I couldn't help as I was studying to remind myself of one of the things that I have often said to our search committee as we continue looking for God's man.

I said, You know what? The Father loves this bride because it belongs to His Son even more than the search committee does. The bride. The bride. The bride.

We are referred to as the Lamb's bride. Furthermore, I want you to recognize in verse 14 that the foundations of the holy city will carry the name of the Lamb.

The underlying stability that we will enjoy in all of eternity is there because of the Lamb. Our worship will be centralized on the Lamb.

Look at verse 22. And I saw no temple in the city. And by the way, to the Old Testament saint, how important was the temple? Buddy, it was supremely important.

[29 : 34] I saw no temple. Why? For its temple is the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb. Our paths, our decisions will be governed by the Lamb.

That's what we find in 23 and 24. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. And so this morning, when we take the bread and we take the cup, what I want you to stop and think about is just how significant Jesus is to your life.

I want to add something as I close. You will not think those kind of thoughts effectively apart from a humble dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

And so this morning, as the men come and we take the elements together, the thing that I want you to do is think about the Lord Jesus, the Lamb, slain from before the foundation of the world for your sins, and we celebrate that fact this morning as we take these elements.

[31 : 00] We are going to... Go ahead, men. Have a seat for a minute. We're going to sing and celebrate the Lord's table together. Behold the Lamb who bears our sins away, slain for us.

We remember the promise made that all would come in faith, find forgiveness at the cross.

So we share in the bread of life as we drink as we drink of His sacrifice as we sign of our arms of peace around the table of the King.

Let me take a moment in prayer. Father, Holy Father, this morning as we gather at this table, we remind ourselves that You, in eternity past, planned for our redemption through the bloody sacrifice and death of Your Son, the Lord Jesus, on our behalf.

And this morning as we take the bread and we take the cup, we want to do so with consciences that are clear. As believers who have come by faith to recognize that salvation is in the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

[33 : 05] And as we take the bread and cup, we bear testimony to that. Our desire also is that, Lord, as we take the bread and cup, our thoughts would reflect that Your purpose in saving us was for Your glory.

That our lives and our obedience would draw attention to Your power and Your grace. Give us an ambition and affection for godliness in the days to come that brings honor to our Son, the Lord Jesus.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[36 : 45] Amen. And when he'd given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body, which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[41 : 15] Amen. Drain the cup that all may enter in to receive the life of God.

In the same way also he took the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

Let's stand together.

Amen. As we rise together to come Our call to follow in the steps of Christ as his body here on earth.

As we share in his suffering. And we'll pray We'll to them again And we'll join The day's of high And at the day's of the day To the day's of high The Lion of Judah, the Lamb that was slain, was sent to heaven and therefore the rain.

[44 : 03] At the end of the age, when the earth will be, we will gather the nations before you. And lives of all men will be fixed on the Lamb who was crucified with wisdom and mercy and justice.

You'll reign the Father's side and the angels will cry, Hail the Lamb!

And the earth will reply, You shall reign As the King of all kings and the Lord of all kings.