

Revelation 5 “The Lion-Lamb”

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[0:00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama.! Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

As you're coming up here and getting settled, raise your hand if you like animals. Anybody up here like animals? Yeah, some of you have gotten to see lots of animals at different places that you've gone and visited. Some of you have animals that live at your house, don't you? Yeah, and animals are a lot of fun. In our passage in the Bible today that we're about to read, God uses animals to help us learn about Jesus. Isn't that cool? So, I need y'all to help me out a little bit. Who can tell me what a lion says? What does a lion say? Just kind of soft like that? What does a lion say? Okay, very good. Very good. Yeah. Lions are the kings of the jungle, right? They're big and they're loud and they're strong and they're scary sometimes, aren't they? We need them to stay behind fences. We can look at them from the other side of the glass, right? Yeah. Let me ask you another question. Does a lamb say roar? Is that what a lamb? No? What? Is that what a lamb says? Yeah, you're right.

Lambs are soft, aren't they? And slow and calm sometimes. So, now, if you're sad, which one of those animals, a lion or a lamb, would you want to cuddle up to you and encourage you and comfort you? Which one do you think? A lamb. I think you're right. But what if you're being attacked? If you're being bullied? If somebody is hurting you or which one of those two animals do you want to fight on your... Oh, you didn't even... Let me finish the question. Lion. Yeah, you're right.

[2:16] But, you know, I was thinking about this this week. I don't know if you can think of a time like this in your life, but sometimes we're sad and scared at the same time, aren't we?

Sometimes we really need both of those things to help us. We need a strong lion who will also scoop us up and hold us in his arms, right? Or we might need a calm lamb because we really need somebody to cuddle up with, but we need him to chase away all of our enemies, don't we? What we're going to read about in the Bible today, you know what the Bible tells us about Jesus? Which one of those animals do you think Jesus is? Y'all are really smart. The Bible tells us Jesus is both. He's a lion and a lamb. Now, when it says that, is it actually telling us that Jesus says, rawr, or that he has a woolly coat? Is that what it means? No, no, that would be silly. It's saying that Jesus is the lion. He is the king who rules over us, right? And he's the lamb, the lamb who loves us so much. He's the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world because he comes and dies for our sins. He defeats all of our enemies and he brings us home to live with him forever. Isn't that amazing? Isn't Jesus awesome that he can do both of those things all the time? I want you to remember that because it means that you can go to Jesus with anything that you have and whatever you need and he'll be exactly what you need. Can you remember that? Jesus is always the one that you need. Thank you all for helping me out and for listening this morning. If you are going to kids worship, you're going to go right out the back door. Miss Sarah Nell is going to meet you right out that door in the back. There, you see Miss Sarah Nell?

She's walking over there. You're going to go to her and the rest of you go back to your seats and listen because we're about to read about the lion and the lamb, okay? Thank you all so much for coming up here.

[4:37] You'll be a great helper. Revelation 5 this morning where we're continuing this account of the throne room of heaven.

John is painting for us this amazing image of what he's taking in as he looks there. We're going to be in Revelation 5 for two weeks. Honestly, the more I read it, the more I could just kind of stay in Revelation 5 forever. I encourage you to read it through this week. I'm reading it every day. There's new things. There's new glories there. So, I'm actually going to read the whole chapter for us this

morning. I want you to get both the tension and the resolution of this beautiful passage of God's Word.

Revelation 5. Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? 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 its 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 with 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 had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the lamb, each 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 scroll and to open its seals. For you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. And you have made them a kingdom and priest to our God. And they shall reign on the earth. Then I looked and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders, the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing. And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is in them, saying to him who sits on the throne and to the lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever. And the four living creatures said, amen. And the elders fell down and worshiped.

Amen. We thank God for his holy word. What an incredible account, right? I just want to give you a second to try to take in what you just heard described. We're going to go back a little bit more slowly. Let's go back to the beginning and see if we can notice what's going on. The chapter opens with the holy, holy, holy God on his throne holding out a scroll. What's that all about? It's important that we know this. Writing on the front and on the back is unusual in this time. But it's saying it's filled up.

[9:10] There's no room to add more, okay? And the seven seals indicate that it's an important document, like a last will and testament of an important person. In this case, the most important, the one on the throne of heaven. To know what's on the scroll, we need to look back and look forward.

We see scrolls like this looking back in the Old Testament. In places like Ezekiel chapter 2, where God tells his prophet Ezekiel to speak his word to his people who are rebelling against him.

Eat the scroll, God says. And then speak out words of lamentation and mourning and woe.

And later in Revelation, we're told that this scroll, like Ezekiel's, will taste sweet in John's mouth, but be bitter in his stomach. See, good and bad. Looking forward in Revelation, that's what we see.

How do we know what's on the scroll? Well, we see some as we keep reading. When the seals are broken, out comes judgment as well as blessing. Revelation 6 and following, we'll get there soon.

[10:41] This scroll then is best understood as God's complete plan for all of history, okay?

God's redemptive purpose is to bring all things to their conclusion with justice upon evil, on the one hand, and rescue for his people, on the other hand. Sweet and bitter, judgment and mercy.

All of these rolled up in one scroll full of the glorious master plan. But there's a problem, isn't there? See, no matter where he looks or how loudly he speaks or how strong he is, the angel can find no one able to open the scroll by breaking its seals. He is searching, isn't he?

Everywhere. Who is worthy? That's the history-shaping question, right? People have been wondering for millennia how to see things set right in the world.

What it means to be worthy of God, so to speak. People have been hoping since the curses and the promises when we were being banished from the Garden of Eden.

[12:11] How do we get back into this close relationship with God that we were made for? People have been longing since Cain murdered Abel to see justice done, right?

To see goodness vindicated. See, this problem here is not merely a matter of knowing God's plan, being able to see what's written on the scroll, but actually to see someone who can make it happen.

The person who can break the seals would be the one who can make God's plan actually happen. The executor, you might say, of the last will and testament. That's what the worthy person would be. So, the problem is that without someone worthy, God's redemptive purposes can't come into effect. His riches, if you will, can't be shared, can't be passed on. Curses can't come upon evil in the world. And blessing can't come to those needing rescue. [13:24] This is a huge problem. Even the strong, sinless angel can't open it. Can't bring God's plan to pass. No one anywhere can do it.

Notice that John's building this tension. I think he wants us to feel some of what he feels. John says, verse 4, he began to weep loudly.

To weep and weep. This is what is welling up inside of John because no one worthy was found. And maybe you're already there. Maybe you are tracking with this instantly. That's great. You're following the weeping. You're already feeling it. Maybe like me, yours started earlier in the service. But most of us need to slow down here until we feel John's tears. See, John is the one who represents us. The people of God in these last ages. The last days between Jesus' two comings.

[14:34] That's us. Exiled, right? Often persecuted. Facing injustice. Wondering what's next for them. That's us.

So John weeps. Why? Because if that scroll can't be opened, the Christians being martyred around the world today have lost.

Never to be vindicated. Because if the scroll can't be opened, those who lied about you to get ahead and never got caught, never get caught.

Because if the scroll can't be opened, people who do things like abuse children and sell women never get the just punishment they deserve.

The punishment coming to them. Because if the scroll can't be opened, the animals made to live in harmony together, the plants made to bloom fruitfully, the stars and the mountains made to just shine and grow majestically, bigger than we can imagine, will never be restored to their former glory.

[16:05] Because if the scroll can't be opened, parents who've lost children way too young, children who've lost parents to dementia way too soon, and people who've lost loved ones to cancer way too often, will never be reunited with them.

Because if the scroll can't be opened, every person who ever lived, even the best people you can think of who have sacrificed worldly pleasure in order to live lives that are more moral than some others, every single person will be lost forever, paying for their sin against a holy God for all eternity.

Lamentation, mourning, and woe only forever. forever. After death, that is a departure from what is then our best life now into eternal despair.

Y'all, I'm not trying to be dramatic. I'm trying to be honest. Do you understand why John's weeping? John wants us to feel that kind of desperation that maybe you haven't felt recently or maybe you're living there as he's weeping repeatedly and uncontrollably.

Now we're starting to be able to see what makes John weep. No justice. No redemption. No hope at all.

[17:57] Friends, people have never managed to organize or meditate or deny or perform themselves into eternal hope and life and righteousness and peace.

That's because no one, none of us is worthy to bring justice and mercy at an ultimate and eternal level. And so, we weep.

Angels are flummoxed. Creation groans. Who is worthy? It's hard.

Especially if there are tears in your eyes like mine right now. I want you to listen. We're going to keep talking about the tears.

Listen to what happens. Verse 5. 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 its seven seals.

[19:24] Look! He says, The lion king promised in Genesis 49 to come from Judah's line. The root of David promised in Isaiah 11 to be the Messiah who would come and rule and set all things right.

The conqueror who has won and earned the right to break the seals and open the scroll. He's here! Look! The lion! And then John starts to draw the attention, doesn't he?

He's going to highlight the plot twist. Just pretend you don't know yet you didn't listen to the children's moment or when I read, okay? Verse 6. And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw, or in the Greek it reads, I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders and of course we expect that what he's telling them is he saw the lion except he says a lamb.

A lamb standing as though it had been slain but alive. Verse 7 the lamb is moving.

He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. Who is worthy? The answer to that question that shapes all of eternity the entire story from eternity past to eternity future is the lion lamb.

[21:03] This is where we're focusing today the multifaceted glory of Jesus it's what this is all about. The lion lamb both of those things in one person as our slide image is going to continue reminding us through the rest of this book.

The lion lamb you could say the God man isn't it amazing after chapter 4 just remember just last week where the one on the throne of heaven is utterly unique incomparable there's no one like him that all of a sudden someone arises from among the elders representing God's people remember and then that that one goes where no one else has dared right up to the throne at the right hand of the throne what's going on see humanity had brought the curse humanity had to restore the blessing he's fully man from among men but at the same time only God could bring divine justice blessing of perfect quality and eternal duration to rebellious people fully

God he is right veiled in flesh the Godhead see hail the incarnate deity the God who's transcendent far beyond who's imminent right here near me you could say the crucified resurrected because think about it the one whose last will and testament needs to be opened has to have died right but if he's also the executor who's going to make these plans happen he will need still to be alive and here is the lamb who has been slain everyone can see it looking at him but he's standing alive that's not the way you were slain on an altar standing alive victorious over death able to bring justice to its fullest extent and mercy to the most undeserving who trusts him notice with me what what this passage says makes

Jesus worthy verse 5 and verse 9 are going to be talking about the same thing verse 5 the lion has conquered so he can break the seals and open the scroll what makes him worthy he conquered verse 9 he's worthy because he was slain what's going on victory see looked like defeat being slain was how this king conquered could that be is that possible did you know that's what was happening on the cross of Jesus when from all we could see from all his followers understood Jesus was being defeated what was actually happening is that he was defeating his greatest enemies keep reading because when he was slain by his blood he ransomed!

people for God from everywhere at all time Jesus was the one exchanged to die in our place and then he rose to live too aha gotcha Satan didn't see that one coming Jesus brought all of these people near to God as his priests and ministers to reign with him now and forever see he brings rescue real rescue eternal life and power and purpose to those who perhaps never experienced those things in this life strugglers victims sufferers martyrs Jesus takes that death that we were just just weeping about facing as sinners and he finally makes a way that justice is satisfied and grace is exalted at the same time death is defeated right sin is conquered life and blessing are ours forever you starting to see why the lion needed to be a lamb the king needed to be one who died in order to conquer so unique also from the perspective of the lamb this is no ordinary lamb right just look at how he's described he's standing with seven horns seven again in revelation completeness in this case complete power we should have already picked up on this as he stood at the throne he is omnipotent right and seven eyes complete knowledge he is omniscient which are actually we're told the seven spirits of God complete holy spirit in all the world through whom

[26:54] Jesus is omnipresent look at this glorious picture it's this trinitarian view with God almighty on his throne where the lamb who was slain stands filled by and sending out holy spirit this is unique to biblical Christianity see Islam has no category for such a lion lamb Jesus in its world view which is why it denies one of the most historically attested events in the history of the world the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth they have Jesus there yeah but he's a prophet in their view they're fine with him as lion king full of powerful teaching and good laws but none of this lamb who was slain on the cross business it can't be both Islam says probably the other main competing world

view in our culture this day is what I call modern

American individualism you know the you be you be true to yourself spirit of our age this one is the opposite what's that like which version of Jesus do they like they're fine with Jesus as the lamb tender kindness and love for everyone that's great you can talk like that can't you won't get in trouble but there's no category for Jesus as king who tells you how the world works how you must live how you were made to function in dependence upon him see biblical Christianity says we must have Jesus the real Jesus the lion lamb the God man the crucified resurrected full of grace and truth who exacts justice on every distortion of his good creation on every offense against his beloved people and his divine nature and who also extends grace to all those facing death everyone who cries out to him praise

Jesus lion and we need both of them and we have both of them in him he is worthy isn't he then to break the seals and open the scroll just take a couple minutes with me to marvel at this multifaceted nature of Jesus I call it his diversity of perfections or seemingly disparate characteristics united in one person he is so marvelously unlike anyone else he is so completely necessary for our hope for our salvation the lion lamb shows us this over and over I am going to just give you a few examples you are going to think of others probably as I am talking Jesus the lion lamb!

speaks to create the world to calm the sea like a lion roaring things into existence and submission but remains silent before his accusers like a lamb led to the slaughter Jesus the lion lamb pronounces curses on the self-reliant religious leaders but pronounces forgiveness to the sinful woman!

Jesus the lion lamb chases away the money changers in the temple with a whip but welcomes the little children up into his arms and puts his hands on them and blesses them Jesus the lion lamb holds all creation together by the word of his power but trusts his father too much to turn a stone into bread when hungry!

[31:06] Jesus the lion lamb rides into Jerusalem to shouts of Hosanna from the crowds but draws away from the admiring crowds who want to make him king so that he can pray Jesus the lion lamb knows that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him but nonetheless wraps a towel around his waist and washes the feet of his disciples Jesus the lion lamb calls his friend Lazarus out of the grave with a word but first he weeps with his suffering grieving friends in the face of death Jesus the lion lamb is the Lord who can require anything of us and we must obey he says we must do what he commands but who also says the work that I've given you to do is to believe in me to trust me to be your good shepherd and then to rest in green pastures and still waters

Jesus the lion lamb is the Lord and the giver of life but he suffers agonizing death himself before rising again to life never more to die is he worthy is he worthy he is like no one else he is we could spend y'all all day one of you encouraged me to do this and I won't use his name because none of you will ever talk to him again encouraged me to spend all day numbering his excellencies as the lion lamb we ought to keep our hearts there today that's what starts happening around the throne in heaven in case you are not yet certain of his equality with holy holy holy

God there he stands at the throne and he receives the joyful worship of all of creation and all of God's people crying worthy we're going to dive into more of the worship songs here next Sunday but it is joyful worship of the one who has great value right the treasure in the field the pearl of great price these are celebratory songs of joy as he brings!

the prayers of God's people God's weeping people right up to the throne of God amidst praises and shouts of worthy it's awesome what's happening is heaven is exploding in worship of the lion lamb who is worthy that's what should happen to us there's so much here for us as we focus on Jesus as we worship him can't wait for that next week but in these verses as we close I want to notice one thing a way of application this is one part of worship what do I do with my tears maybe you've thought that when you're having a terrible day and coming into this building maybe you've thought that when you're trying to talk to God to worship him on Tuesday afternoon and you just can't through the tears you remember the tears

John was crying the tears we joined him in that we will no doubt have more opportunities to have day after day we're in a world of injustice and sin and persecution and pain and grief and death those tears some religions tell you that the key with those tears is to ignore them ignore the tears rise above the pain find inner peace other philosophers of our day tell you to embrace the despair of your tears that there's nothing beyond this world the best option you have is to enjoy today because eventually nothingness is going to overtake you tears tears are all there is John says something

different he says take your tears to

[35 : 49] Jesus do you feel the world is broken we do is all creation groaning it is you're not alone so take your tears of grief and pain your your longings for reunion and restoration your groanings against injustice and division take them all to Jesus and you can say I don't understand Jesus what you're doing most days but you've you've been through even death and have shown me even death is not the end of the story that you have the scroll in your hand when I don't so you must be working things to your glory and to my good even when the things themselves are not good you're making them you promise me so that I really will weep no more you can say that to Jesus you see how that doesn't doesn't belittle your tears or give your tears the last word that's what

Jesus does with your tears that's why we bring our tears to him as a part of our worship right only a tender lion or a strong lamb can actually help us we need someone loving enough to care about our predicament our pain our tears and strong enough to fix it to heal it to wipe them away Jesus doesn't minimize the hurt or lose sight of the hope take your tears your groanings and hurts your your longings and your prayers to Jesus and know that one day you will weep no more for one reason because the lion of Judah the lamb who was slain is worthy let's pray Jesus that's our only hope we know none other who can wipe away our tears who can set things right and so we ask you to show yourself big and great and glorious and near and compassionate and merciful worthy and we want to give you that praise now in this moment we want that to be the way our lives work that we look to you and we point others to you because you're the one who's worthy and so stir in our hearts the praise of heaven we ask in your name amen for more information visit us online at southwood.org you