

Jesus the Worthy Executive of God's Plan

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[0 : 00] If you would turn with me now please to Revelation chapter 5, looking at this chapter but especially the first six or seven verses or so, Revelation and chapter 5.

The book of Revelation you might describe as a great drama, not a drama in the sense of Game of Thrones or any of those fantasy dramas that you find, however enjoyable or otherwise they might be, this is not that type of drama.

It's a drama nevertheless. It's an acting out as you read through the book of the Revelation of real history. It's an acting out in the visions that were given to John as he saw these visions of things that were to come.

And indeed he's taken back at times to things before history began. And he's taken beyond the end of the world into the final destiny of human beings and of the universe and particularly so of God's redeemed people.

And as that drama unfolds it's mostly to do with the content of this scroll that's mentioned in this chapter. The book of Revelation begins with an account of Jesus, but Jesus in the midst of his people, in the midst of the golden candlestick, as it's put there in the first three chapters, there are of course letters, mostly letters to the churches, to the seven churches.

[1 : 37] And we take that as being descriptive not only of churches that were in place historically but also an address to us as his church today. That these things in principle as they're brought out for us apply to us and will be so to the end of the world.

And as you come here to this chapter 5, chapter 4 as we mentioned, has this great vision of God on his throne and the things that surround the throne, the beings that surround his throne, and the exclamations there of the holiness of God and his majesty and his greatness as that is set out in this chapter.

And then you come to chapter 5 where you see in the hand of him who is seated on the throne, the hand of God, there's a scroll written on the inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

And as you look at the rest of the book of the Revelation, as those seals are opened, and as the content of the scroll in this great drama of the outworking of the destiny of the universe, you could say, as you see that and as you participate in it, as the audience, as it were, looking at this drama, you find this great question coming to be asked.

Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? Who is qualified to be God's executive? Which individual can possibly take to himself the task and be qualified to administer this great plan of God, to administer this plan where the redemption of his people, where the restoration of the universe, where reconciliation to God, where the defeat of death, where all of that is taken into account, where Satan and all his forces are finally and ultimately and completely overcome in victory.

[3 : 34] Who is going to be sufficient for that? Where can we find this executive? That's the great question here as the drama continues and as you come to this critical point.

Who is worthy to open the scroll and its seals? That's our point for consideration briefly this morning as the chapter addresses that question and answers that question very definitively and positively with what it has to tell us about this individual who takes the scroll and who begins to open its seals. The search for a qualified executive is the first point. The search for a qualified executive for God. That's the burden of the question. Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? And when it says who is worthy, it really means who has the moral authority?

Who has the weight of authority that can possibly handle such things as the destiny of the universe? Who has that moral authority to take this scroll, to take this great plan of God and begin to open and administer the outworkings of it?

[4 : 48] Who is going to take charge of the destiny of the universe and all the human beings and the lives that exist within it? Who is going to be worthy?

And I looked, he said, and no one in heaven, on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look in it. Let me just take you back a little in the Old Testament to the book of Job, a book which in its own way is somewhat difficult in parts of it to understand.

But when you come to the final chapters of the book of Job, you'll find that chapters 38 to 41 are especially filled with questions.

And they're questions from God to Job. Because Job, of course, in his predicament had so many questions and so many things that he fired up and fired back at God, if you like.

And actually then God comes to address him and he says, Who is this that darkens counseled by words without knowledge? Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

[5 : 57] Tell me if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? On what were its bases struck? Have you commanded the morning since the days began? Have you entered into the springs of the sea?

Where is the way to the dwelling of light? And all the way through these chapters, you find these questions from God being fired at Job. In other words, God is really asking the question, Are you worthy to handle these issues?

Are you worthy? Are you really adequate? Are you qualified to take these things of my providence, of the outworking of my plan, of things that have to do with my wisdom?

Can you handle these things, Job? And as Job is taken on that great tour of the universe, if you like, he then comes to acknowledge his smallness and his smallness in understanding as well as in stature.

And he said, I heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you. And I abhor myself and I repent in dust and ashes.

[7 : 00] That's what we ourselves need to really understand more and more about this God as he looks for an executive. There is no one amongst human beings, mere human beings, qualified to take charge of this scroll.

And the question that addresses us is in such a way that we will look elsewhere and we will look to God's own provision of an executive. Who is qualified to carry out God's great plan?

Because here is John saying, I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or look into it. John, you see, knew that somebody needed to take this scroll and its contents and be in charge of its outworking.

Otherwise, if no one is found qualified to do it, there can be no such thing as redemption or a recreation of God's universe to be restored from its state under the curse of sin.

If nobody can be found qualified to take this scroll, then death reigns. And Satan continues in his own way of controlling human beings.

[8 : 10] Who is worthy? Where can someone be found? I wept because no one was found.

I wept loudly because no one was found worthy in heaven or on earth or under the earth. And then he's told, weep no more.

Now, remember, you're watching this drama. You're the audience watching this drama as you read through these words in this book of the Revelation, this great drama that's opening out before us.

And here is this sense of despair, if you like, almost, where John is saying, I wept loudly. And you just participate in that as you follow the way that it opens out before you.

And then it comes to something very different. There's a sense of excitement. There's an exclamation. There's an elder who comes and says, weep no more. Don't go on crying anymore.

[9 : 08] There's no reason to weep anymore. There is one. There is one. And then he describes the one.

And that's our second point, the uniquely qualified executive. There is one. 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 that really contains two things. First of all, who is he? And secondly, what has he done that brings this qualification to open the book?

Well, who is he? He's described in these two parts of his title, if you like. He's the lion of the tribe of Judah and he's the root of David. That's who he is. That's a description of his person.

And of course, these words themselves are very descriptive, aren't they? As you see this great drama, you suddenly have this description, the lion of the tribe of Judah. And you have this picture of this magnificent beast, this great animal.

[10:18] That's the king of the jungle. That's king of the plains. That's really above the food chain. This great lion, this powerful creature.

And as you translate that into a spiritual meaning, you find that this person is marked by being so powerful. He has the seven horns.

That's described there having seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. In other words, this person, this figure has immensity of power and calculable power.

He is the lion. But he's the lion of the tribe of Judah. And that takes you back to the Old Testament, to God's promises and to his promises that there would be indeed a king who would come from the tribe of Judah.

That he would be a priest king. That he would be a person qualified uniquely to be over God's people. And here he is. He is the lion of the tribe of Judah. Not only is he immense in his power, not only is he great as he's described as the lion, which is the lion of the tribe of Judah, he's a royal king.

[11:32] He is characterized by majesty, by regalness, and by everything you describe in terms of royalty except it's here perfected and brought to its ultimate.

He is the king of kings and the lord of lords. He is the lion of the tribe of Judah. Majesty, power, prestige.

And he's also the root of David. The root of David means, firstly, he is a descendant of David. God's promises in the Old Testament were that there would be one who would come to be a son of David, who would sit upon his throne and his kingdom would last forever.

And we know, of course, now from the New Testament that is Jesus. That's this person. That is this royal, mighty, majestic person who is the lion of the tribe of Judah, but the root of David.

[12:35] He is that person who's descended from David. He is the person that has fulfilled or God has fulfilled his promise of providing a king for his people in him. And not only is he a root in that sense, in Isaiah chapter 11, comes to mind, chapter 11, verses 1 and 10, that one would arise from the shoot, as a shoot of Jesse, from the stem or the root of Jesse, the father of David.

So he's a descendant of David, but he's also the ancestor of David. Remember that great question that Jesus posed to the Pharisees in Matthew chapter 22, having dealt with the Sadducees who had come to the view that there was no such thing as a resurrection, and Jesus dealt with them and then he moved on to the Pharisees who were his chief opponents in many regards and he says to them, what about Christ?

What do you think about Christ? What do you think of him? Whose son is he? And they immediately replied, oh, this is the son of David because they knew the scriptures. He's the son of David. And then he said, well, if he's the son of David, how then does David in the spirit, going back to the Psalm 110 especially, how then does David in the spirit call him Lord?

If he is David's son, how can he be David's Lord? Silence. No answer.

They're confounded. But of course, this is the point that Jesus is making. He is the descendant of David in terms of his incarnation, his taking out humanity, his fulfilling God's promise of a descendant of David who would sit upon his throne, but he's the ancestor of David.

[14:26] He's the creator of David. He's the Lord of David. He's the uniquely qualified person to be God's executive to take the scroll.

So that's who he is. This majestic, regal figure, this one who has come from David and who's the ancestor of David, this person who's like no other.

And he's qualified not only by who he is, but the verses tell us he's qualified especially by what he has done. What has this person done to make him uniquely qualified to take this scroll and open its seals and be in charge of the rest of the history of humanity and of the universe?

Well, it says, Weep no more. Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered so that he can open the scroll. You see, there's the key to understanding this great vision, this great verse, this great passage, this drama, this part of the drama, this act in the drama.

He has conquered so that he can open. It's the fact that he has conquered that makes him uniquely qualified to open the scroll and its seven seals.

[15 : 43] And then, of course, your question is, well, how has he conquered? If he has conquered, and if it's by conquering that he has come to be uniquely qualified as the executive of God, how has he conquered?

And that's then set out in what follows. Between the throne and the four living creatures, and among the elders, I saw a lamb standing as though it had been slain or just having the appearance of being newly slain with seven horns and seven eyes and seven spirits of God, which are the seven spirits of God.

And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. I saw a lamb standing as though it had been slain.

You see, that combination itself is unique, isn't it? Because here's a person who is at one and the same time a lion and a lamb. Not a lamb in terms of its gentleness or meekness in this instance, but a lamb in the sense of the animal that was taken to be slain and sacrificed.

The lamb that God himself had specified would be taken and set apart and used in the sacrifices of the Old Testament age. And it's fulfilled in him.

[17 : 07] He is, despite his greatness and indeed as part of his greatness, he has come to put himself into the position of taking the sin and the death of his people and dying that death for them.

I saw a lamb as though it had been slain. Now, that doesn't mean that Jesus is seen in heaven now as a newly slain lamb.

That doesn't mean that those in heaven see Jesus like this, exactly as a lamb as it had been slain.

Is this really a vision given to John to convey something important in meaning about this person?

And what it's saying essentially is this great person, this regal person, this majestic figure, this person who is going to take charge of this scroll, he's no other than, he's no less than, he's no different to the Jesus who died, the Jesus who lived in this world, the Jesus whose life in this world was marked by humility and humiliation and humbling of himself and obedience and suffering and death, the death of the cross particularly.

That's who he is. That's what he is. done. This person has actually given himself to the death that was required for redemption, for restoration, for all that to be in place and accomplished.

[18 : 45] He is the Lamb of God. the same one who died is the one who now comes forward in heaven and takes the scroll from the hand of him who sits upon the throne.

He has that moral authority because he has conquered, because he has done this, because he's done what no one else could. 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 24 elders fell down before the Lamb. And they sang a new song saying, Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open it since 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.

And when we say that the vision of Jesus in heaven is not literally one of a slain lamb, that doesn't mean at all that heaven is not conscious of who he is and of what he has done.

That's right at the very center of heaven's praise and of heaven's worship and of heaven's understanding. That's why they're singing this song as John was given to see it in this great drama.

[20 : 12] And as you look into it and as you see this happening before you, you're taken up to heaven, you're taken into heaven, you're taken to see this great figure in heaven of Jesus, the Jesus who died, the Jesus who comes forward and takes the scroll and begins to open the scroll and is in charge of the destiny of the universe and heaven breaks out into song and says, you are worthy, you have the moral authority, you are the king and you are the king in the sense in which you have died this death and have conquered and have redeemed, ransomed people for God by your blood.

that's the basis of our redemption and that's the celebration of heaven. It's not just that they're aware of this fact about this person but they are aware of it to the extent that they make it their praise, they make it the subject of their praise, they make it indeed the primary subject of their praise.

worthy are you for you have done this. This is some job description, isn't it?

Imagine God, if you can just continue with the sense of this being a drama, a drama that's real, real history, a drama that conveys to us things which are factually true and belong to God's truth.

You imagine God, as it were, drawing up this job description of this executive position and looking for somebody qualified. Here is God drawing up this job description.

[21 : 59] He's going to have to be divine, he's going to have to be human, he's going to have to take the sin of the world to himself, he's going to have to die for his people, the sin, taking their sin and all that's attached to that by way of the curse.

He's going to have to remove the curse from the whole universe that the first Adam brought about, that we brought about in him by our sin. He's going to have to take the weight of God's wrath against sin and not only just bear it, but bear it victoriously as well as vicariously.

who is worthy to answer that job description? And in comes the Son of God and says, I'll do it.

And so God gives him, God gives him this task. And you know his final words on the cross.

Before resurrection had ever taken place in his experience, before he had come to burst the grave open through his resurrection, nevertheless, in terms of rendering an atonement and an adequate provision for sin, he said himself, it is finished.

[23 : 30] I have done it. He's taken the job description, and he has conquered, and he has overcome, and he's paid the price of sin, and he is our redeemer, the redeemer of God's people, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But what thirdly about the audience responds? Here we are today, we're all here, part of this audience, just sitting, if you like, before this stage of scripture, and watching this great drama, or this act of it, this part of it taking place before us.

We see the throne in heaven, we see everything surrounding the throne, and its majesty, and its glory, and its holiness. We see this person on the throne with a scroll in his hand, we see him asking this question, who is worthy to open the scroll and its seals, a strong angel proclaiming that with a loud voice, something of huge significance and importance, who is worthy?

You see John weeping, tears streaming down his face, there's nobody in heaven or on earth, or under the earth, or anywhere that you can see of ordinary humanity, there's nobody even among the angels who can do this.

And then he's told, weep no more, because there is one. We've seen, we've seen that drama briefly. What is our response as an audience today?

[25 : 12] Well, a number of points come to mind. First of all, Christian faith celebrates the uniqueness of Christ.

Christian faith celebrates the uniqueness of Christ. There is no other figure like this. You don't find this in any other religion. You don't find this in secularism, you don't find this in humanism, you don't find this anywhere else except in the gospel, in the gospel of our Father and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the gospel of the Lord himself.

That's where you find this uniquely qualified person. And it's not a matter of equality, it's not a matter of being politically correct, it's not something where you just somehow or other feel embarrassed because we claim in the Christian gospel that Jesus Christ is unique.

He is unique! There's no one else like him. There's no one else that has the position that he has.

There's no one else that has the authority he has. There's no one else that has the ability he has.

There's no one else that has the status he has. There's no one else who has done what he has done.

There's no one else who is doing what he's doing now as he is at the right hand of God and the majesty on high.

[26 : 31] That's what we're saying about Christ. That's what our Bible tells us. That's what this drama is setting forth. That he is himself the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

And we celebrate that great fact. We actually have it as part of our worship. As a prominent part of our worship. That we worship Jesus. That we worship him for who he is.

And we worship him for what he's done. Because he's the uniquely qualified executive of God's plan. And that's why you see the rest of the book of Revelation is really a series of opening of these seals and of the events that are then associated with it.

They're mysterious. Some of them are very hard to understand. And apply to history. But this is what's happening. It's all about the lamb, the lion, this Jesus.

He was and is and is to come. And secondly, salvation. The salvation founded on Jesus and accomplished by Jesus is not a theory.

[27 : 42] It's not a philosophy. philosophy in the sense in which you might find philosophies of life and other ways of looking at the world and looking at human life and looking at our destiny and all of

these issues, important as they are.

This is not a philosophy. This is not something that is theoretical. It's all about this king. It's all about him factually, truthfully, and his reign, and his position, and his dignity, and his status.

What a positive outlook that gives to us. As you look at the world, and as you look at the world the way it is, we may think it's just descending more and more into chaos and descending more and more into an abyss of darkness and immorality.

And there's good reason why people should think that, and why even some Christians may come to the conclusion that really, is that not actually what's happening when you see all that's taking place in our own society and throughout the world, and all that has to do with oppression and darkness and war and murder and crime and horrible things.

Well, all of these things are there, but they're part of the content of this scroll. And they're part of the content of this scroll that's in the hand of this Christ, this King, this Lord.

[29 : 10] He's the one who's opening the seals. He's the one who's in charge of the contents. And the future is in his hands.

He has the whole world in his hands. He has the destiny of human beings. He has the whole course of history from now to the end of the world in his hands.

He has the book. He's taken the scroll. And he's owned it. And he's worthy to open it. And he has your future and my future in his hands.

You don't find security if you're not in Christ. You don't find security by looking elsewhere. I looked, he said, nobody else was found anywhere else.

It doesn't matter what comes and goes by way of philosophies of life or religions, however old they might be, however ancient they might be in their pedigree.

[30 : 14] It doesn't matter how modern they might be. It doesn't matter how much they fit with human thinking as you see it now, here and now today. This is the uniquely qualified executive. This is where your security is.

And when your life is in the hand of this Christ, when you've willingly come and said, I want this man to be my Lord. I want this person, this divine human person. I want this God man.

This is the one I want in charge of my destiny, my personal destiny. You see, that's one of the great things about him. It's not that he simply has this scroll in his hand and therefore he's in charge of the whole vastness of the universe as he is without paying attention to each and every individual life that comes to him for help.

that's not how he is. And every Christian, every born again person here today knows that for all that he is indeed the king and the master of the universe and has this scroll in his hand, he's the one who loved me and gave himself for me.

That's staggering. That's staggering beyond words. That he should have such an interest and such a puny and pathetic figure as I am as a sinner.

[31 : 33] This person who has this regal majesty and authority, who has this moral authority to rule the universe, that he should have an interest in me. Yes, of course, that's what he's like.

That's part of his qualification, that he's true to his calling as our savior. and today, whatever your life is or is in your life, don't imagine that Jesus is not interested or that he can't understand or that he's too great to come alongside you and take your burdens.

that's not who he is. For all that he is indeed so great, he is also the one who has compassion and understanding and fellow feeling with us in our humanity, in our fallenness, in our desperate plight, a sinner, in the pains of this life, in the losses, the bereavements, the sorrows, the unexpected losses, the disappointments, the crushing blows.

But you see, they're already in the book, in the scroll. The scroll that's in his hands. And so he's in charge of them. And there's nothing in your life today that you cannot bring to him.

And there's nothing in your life today that you can safely leave without bringing it to him. That's why the destiny of the universe is safe in his hands.

[33 : 35] It's not under politicians, it's not under dictators. It's not dependent on how these sort of things work out in the world. Empires come and empires go, dictators come, dictators go, political regimes rise up and then fall.

It's not dependent on any of that. The scroll is not in their hands. They are in the scroll that's in his hands. And that's the Jesus that gives us that positive outlook on our own private individual lives and indeed on the whole world and the universe and its destiny.

Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? 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.

You contrast that with the secularism that wants to take over our Christian faith, that wants to displace it, or really ultimately to be in its place.

You take that with the atheism, put it alongside with the atheism that denies God and denies God his rights and his existence. Ask the question of these outlooks.

[35 : 08] Who in your system is worthy to open the scroll, to take charge of the destiny of human beings? And you will not find a response saying, weep no more.

I have someone here. you can't find it. There is no such figure in secularism or humanism or atheism or indeed anywhere else as we've said, but in this Christian faith and this gospel.

So the secularist is left with his weeping. The atheist is left with her continued despair. death. But the Christian, weep no more.

You don't need to weep. Yes, you weep over your sorrows, with your sorrows and the cause of your sorrows. Yes, you weep in the things that cause you to weep and God does not at all prohibit your grief or the display of your grief.

but weep no more in this sense. You know it's in his book, in his scroll, it's in his hands.

[36 : 29] And when you know that today, you can face life positively. You can face life in a way that no other can. Because your life is safe and safe only in the hands of this great, glorious Savior.

Let's pray. Lord, our God, as we come so briefly to touch upon your majesty and to be confronted by your majesty, Lord, we pray that we may be the more humbled by the privileges we have.

We have the privilege of your gospel, the privilege of being able to bring our concerns, to you, to speak directly with you as the King of heaven. We have the privilege of knowing that you have conquered and that all that we need to overcome has already been overcome in principle by your conquering.

We thank you that all who have come to trust in you and will trust in you to the end of the world, that of them it can truly be said and they can say of themselves, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

So bless us now we pray throughout this day. Continue with us this evening as we anticipate again your worship and coming under the authority of your word and all for Jesus' sake.

[37 : 58] Amen. We'll conclude our worship now singing in Psalm 89, the psalm we had in our third singing. We'll sing this time Psalm 89 verses 25 to 29.

A psalm which speaks about David and also David's descendant, the greater David if you like, the one of whom we've been thinking this morning. Psalm 89 at verse 25, that's on page 346, the tune is Argyle, singing 25 to 29, His hand and power shall reach afar, I'll set it in the sea, and his right hand established shall in the river be.

Verses 25 to 29, to God's praise. His hand and power shall reach afar, I'll set it in the sea, and his right hand he's accomplished shall in the rivers be.

thou art my father he shall cry thou art my God alone and he shall say thou me north He gorgeous thine he my Firstborn tonight Than kings of any land.

My love I'll ever keep for him.

[40 : 27] My covenant fast shall stand. His seed I buy.

My power will be. Forever to endure.

And as the days of heaven is thrown. The Lord shall stable be and sure.

If you allow me to get to the main door please after the benediction. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The love of God the Father. And the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always.

Amen.