

**THE SLAIN, EXALTED LAMB**  
**REVELATION 5**

We are Christians. We are followers of Jesus Christ. No day on our calendar of worship demonstrates our dependence on Christ more than Easter morning. On this day we affirm we need Him and we will worship Him above all other things and people. But on this day, where will we go to see the exaltedness, the power, the authority of Christ?

- ✓ We could go to the OT and the prophecies of His coming (Dt. 18:15), His death and substitutionary atonement (Is. 53), or His second coming and Messianic rule (Zech. 14).
- ✓ We could go to the appearance of the incarnate God-Man in His birth (Lk. 2) — what power and humility are demonstrated in the conjoining of manhood to deity, the most singular birth in the history of the world!
- ✓ We could go to the cross and the most unique death in history — the only event in human history in which a Man voluntarily gave up His life and controlled the instant of His death (Jn. 19:30).
- ✓ We could go to the resurrection and **the empty tomb of Christ**, what Spurgeon says is the place “where God’s glory is most seen” (Mk. 16:1-8).

These are all worthy passages and topics to consider on Resurrection Morning. Today I want to take you to a different scene — the end of the story in the heavenly scene of the resurrected and ascended Christ in **Rev. 5**.

This chapter is a continuation of Revelation 4. In these two chapters, we get a glimpse of the heavenly throne of God (17x in chs. 4-5) and see the Triune members of Godhead (Father, Son, and Spirit), the angelic realm, and the redeemed church of Christ. The chapters anticipate the coming judgment of God (beginning in 6:1). And this chapter particularly points to the worthiness of Christ to judge sinners, to redeem sinners, and to be worshipped. Though not stated explicitly, the death and resurrection of Christ is at the center of His worthiness. This heavenly picture is an extension of the work of Christ on Resurrection morning and a reminder to us that when we follow the resurrected Christ we have not wasted our lives.

This heavenly vision of the resurrected and ascended Christ teaches us:

**THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST REVEAL HIS WORTHINESS TO REDEEM, RULE,  
AND BE REVERED FOR ALL ETERNITY.**

In this passage, we observe **three heavenly vignettes** that demonstrate the exalted worthiness of Christ:

1. A **QUESTION**: “Who is Worthy?” (vv. 1-4)
2. A **REVELATION**: “One Who is Worthy.” (vv. 5-8)
3. An **EXULTATION**: “The One Who is Worthy!” (vv. 9-14)

## 1. A QUESTION: "Who is Worthy?" (vv. 1-4)

### • A great dilemma (vv. 1-2)

- ✓ This scene is a continuation of ch. 4 — the first word in this chapter is "then..." (untranslated in NASB). We should see this chapter as part of what has preceded in ch. 4.
- ✓ When this scene is revealed to the apostle John, he sees God on His throne, a book, and an angel.
- ✓ He sees God —
  - God is **on the throne** — there is one Heaven and one throne in Heaven, and only One Person who is capable of sitting on that throne. Others are *around* the Throne, but only He is worthy to be seated on it (though His Son also sat with Him, 3:21). He is supremely authoritative.
  - John is immediately drawn to God's **right hand**. That the book is in His right hand indicates strength and authority; this is a figure for God's power by which He rules all things. That only He holds this book indicates that He initiates and controls the events in this book.
  - In His right hand is a book — literally, "**upon** His right hand..." His hand is open, inviting someone to come and take it out of His hand. But who has the position and power to take this book from the hand of God? (Already, there is an intimation that no one is worthy.)
- ✓ He sees a **book** —
  - The **book** is more literally a scroll that is rolled up and placed on God's hand.
  - Most scrolls had writing only on one side and then rolled up with the writing "inside." But this scroll has writing on **both sides**, indicating the completeness of the revelation in the scroll. Nothing else is needed to complete or add to this revelation. It is God's comprehensive counsel.
  - The scroll also is **sealed with seven seals**. When the seals are opened in ch. 6, it appears that they are not all on the outside along the length of the scroll, but that they are placed in successive places on the inside of the scroll — the revelation will also be successive. Because John can see these seals, they are probably at the end (top or bottom) of the scroll.
    - ... Seals were used in secular culture for testimonies or wills and could only be opened in court by an authorized member of the court — not just anyone could open it.
    - ... So the seals on this scroll authenticate the scroll and the One who wrote it. Not all can open it.
    - ... Also, the events in this scroll are only known to God and will be revealed only when He reveals.
  - One question you may have (and the commentators do have) is, "what is in the book?"
    - ... Some have suggested that the book is the story of man's loss of his lordship over creation and the regaining of that authority by the God-Man Jesus Christ — indicated at the opening of the seventh seal and the blowing of the seventh trumpet from that seal (11:15). So the suggestion has been made that this might be entitled, "The Book of Redemption."

... More precisely, it is clear that with the opening of the seals, God is pouring out His judgment on unredeemed man on the earth (chs. 6-16; cf. 6:1); it is a “history” of the future that leads to the Kingdom of Christ and His rule over the earth.

... While we can't be certain of the exact contents of the book, what is clear is that the book is authoritative and *must* be opened. But who will open it?

- ✓ He sees and hears an **angel** (v. 2) —
  - Some have suggested that this is Gabriel or Michael; we just can't be certain.
  - But we do know that the angel is **strong** and has a **loud voice**. He is authoritative. All angels are strong, but since John emphasizes that the angel is strong it implies a particular strength.
  - The question that the angel repeatedly proclaims is **Who is worthy...?** Not just “fit, deserving...”
    - ... Who has the rank, authority, and power to read and carry out the dictates of the scroll?
    - ... Who has the character to right the wrongs of sinful man (judge) and redeem sinners?
    - ... That the **strong angel** asks the question indicates that he is incapable — and so are all men.
- ✓ This question really sums up the problem of all men — who can approach God's throne and take this scroll or provide a defense for himself? How will we account for sin — and our own sin?

#### • A great inadequacy (v. 3)

- ✓ **And no one...** The word **no one** is prominent and an immediate answer to the question.
- ✓ John summarizes that a search was done in three realms for someone worthy — in **Heaven**, on **earth**, and **under the earth** (the realm of the dead and Hell) — and there was no one worthy.
- ✓ The point is that in all the created universe, there is complete inability to read and carry out the contents and commands of the scroll. “The absolute failure to find anyone worthy...shows how futile and meaningless all of history ultimately is apart from Christ.” [Fanning] Man is incapable.
- ✓ So impressive and weighty is this book that no created being can bear it or carry it out.
- ✓ This again speaks to man's inability. For all that man can do, we ultimately are morally weak and incapable. There is nothing good to commend us to God or enable us to stand before Him.
  - We are sinners by nature and deed (Rom. 5:12) and sin is what we pervasively do (Rom. 3:8ff).
  - No sinner (which all of us are) will stand on his own before God. Even if the scroll is in an open palm we will not be able to grasp it or take it (Ps. 1:4-5).

#### • A great sorrow (v. 4)

- ✓ John's immediate response to the inability of any created being to take the scroll is to **weep greatly**. This is uncontrolled weeping. He is heaving with grief and crying loudly, continually, and inconsolably.
- ✓ The inadequacy of anyone to read the scroll puts man in a terrible place.
- ✓ Redemption and the Messianic hope now appears to be put off indefinitely. Who will help?
- ✓ The angel and the vision emphasize the inability of man to attend to his spiritual needs — and that is still our condition; our total inability should lead to grief for our condition. We are hopeless.

- ✓ While John was weeping, he is addressed by one of the elders of Heaven (4:4, 10; possibly a figure of speech for Christ's redeemed church; more likely an angelic being) — there is more to this story!

## 2. A REVELATION: "One Who is Worthy." (vv. 5-7)

### • A strong rebuke (v. 5a)

- ✓ "**Stop weeping!**" This is a forceful command to stop something that has been started.
- ✓ Specifically he tells John to **behold** ("look") — in other words, John's attention has been on the wrong item in the Throne room — he has been looking at the scroll and looking for earthly answers for a heavenly problem. He needs to look to a heavenly solution for the earthly problem (of sin).
- ✓ The angel corrects John and reminds us as well — no matter how bad and hard our circumstances, there is a heavenly answer and provision for us.
- ✓ While our situation might appear dire and pitiable, God has made provision for us.
- ✓ Our circumstances and our sinful lives cannot overwhelm God's provision. What has God provided?

### • A subjugating Messiah (v. 5b) — here Christ is revealed in two Messianic terms

- ✓ Jesus is called **the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah** —
  - Others are called lions (including Satan, 1 Pt. 5:8). But Christ is *the* Lion — the supreme Lion.
  - To call Him the Lion is to emphasize His majesty, power, and authority. He is the King.
  - To call Him the Lion from **Judah** also emphasizes that He has fulfilled God's promise through Jacob (**Gen. 49:11**). He is the ultimate King from God's Kingly line who will destroy His enemies.
- ✓ Jesus is also called **the Root of David** —
  - To call Him the Root suggests that a tree has been cut down but a root remains and will grow.
  - Israel has been "cut down" — was taken into captivity in Egypt and Babylon, suffering under the Greek and Roman empires with the Temple destroyed. But the **Root** will restore the **Davidic** line; He will grow up and redeem Israel. Jesus is the ultimate Davidic King (**Ps. 110:1**; **2 Sam. 7:16**).
- ✓ As the Messiah, Jesus **has overcome** (the term is emphatic in the clause — "Behold the Overcomer, the lion;" cf. **17:14**). He is not vanquished, but the victor; He is not troubled, but triumphant; He is not defeated, but dominant; He is not overwhelmed, but overcomes.
- ✓ As the Messiah, Jesus has the "obvious credentials, status, and acclaim" [Fanning] to subjugate the world to Himself — providing judgment for unrepentant sinners and redemption for the repentant.
- ✓ Specifically, He overcomes so that He can open the book, break the seals, and carry out the duties and responsibilities of the book. He can do it because He is the One who has subjugated all things to Himself. He is in authority and can righteously judge all sin and sinners — something He has already done at cross & ascension (**3:21**). Everything wrong will be made right (**Rom. 12:19**). God's purposes will not be thwarted. God can be trusted with the greatest of men's (our) problems.

- A standing, slain Lamb (v. 6)

- ✓ Here is the central explanation of the glory of Christ in this passage. While listening (v. 5) John heard about a lion, but when he looked (**I saw**, v. 6) John sees **the Lamb** — both indicate aspects of Christ's character that are essential.
- ✓ **The Lamb is standing** — He is doing what the Lamb should be doing — standing.
  - Only John uses this word **Lamb** and in Revelation he uses it to refer to Christ 28x!
  - He is the worshipped Lamb (5:8, 12), the wrathful Lamb (6:16), the shepherd Lamb (7:17), the Lamb ruling Hell (14:10), the warrior Lamb (17:14), and the Lamb who is groom (19:7, 9; 21:9).
  - But He is also a **slain** Lamb (v. 6) — the word indicates that He was slaughtered and that He continues in that state — He is the perpetually sacrificed Lamb. The picture is not that He was dead and has remained dead, but that the effect of His death and sacrifice continues.
  - That He has been sacrificed and is standing means that He died and now is no longer dead — He has been resurrected and is perpetually resurrected (**1:18; 2:8**). He was the final sacrifice for sin but He still stands erect and alive in the sight of all of the heavenly realm.
  - That He is standing in Heaven also suggests that He was not merely resuscitated like Lazarus, but that He has been resurrected to an eternal life; He has come to life and remained alive.
- ✓ Even more than slain and resurrected, notice that He is standing **between the throne...** — John means that He is standing at the Throne of God with the four living creatures and the 24 elders surrounding Him. The resurrected Lamb has access to and is the center of the heavenly picture.
- ✓ And He is standing at the place where no one else can stand and none can enter. Others may be around the throne of God, but none has access and ability to sit on that throne like Christ (**3:21**).
- ✓ This resurrected and ascended Lamb has three other shocking and unexpected characteristics:
  - He has **seven horns** — the number seven indicating completion and perfection and horns referring to His power and strength. He is perfectly strong — omnipotent — in all He does. Though a perpetual sacrifice, death has not weakened His omnipotence.
  - He has **seven eyes** — He sees perfectly and completely — omniscient and all-wise (**Zech. 4:10**).
  - He has the **seven Spirits of God** which is the perfection of the Holy Spirit (1:4). He is the One who sends the Holy Spirit to accomplish His purposes (**Jn. 15:26**).
  - These characteristics are atypical for a lamb — but not for the eternal Lamb of God.
- ✓ Putting all the imagery of the resurrected Christ together from verses 5-6, we see the majestic and powerful Lion combined with the humility, gentleness, and salvation of the sacrificial Lamb with the horns of power and authority. There is none like this resurrected Christ.
- ✓ This is why the elder says to John **Stop weeping** — there is a provision for One who can take the book from God the Father and redeem sinners and rectify all sin and suffering.
- ✓ If Christ had only been a man (and not God), or God (and not a man), or if Christ had not fulfilled every demand of the Law, or if Christ had only died and not been resurrected, or had only been

resuscitated briefly, then John's weeping (and ours) would be more than appropriate. We would be hopeless. But Christ *was* the God-Man, and *did* fulfill the Law, and *did* die, and *was* resurrected, and *has remained* resurrected. And now we have confidence. The tears are rightly gone.

- ✓ Every day we are confronted by our weakness: we need to eat several times a day; our bodies deteriorate even with exercise; we need sleep nightly; we are forgetful; and we sin — and can do nothing to exonerate ourselves. This is our great guilt and grief. When we look at the condition of our souls, it is hopeless; we need to hear these words: ***stop weeping***. There is more to the story.

- **A sovereign Judge (v. 7)**

- ✓ Remember how this chapter opened? ***Who is worthy to open the book...?***
- ✓ Now the question is answered: Jesus, who was at the center of Heaven, with access to the Throne, seated alongside the Father reaches out and ***took*** the book from the hand of God.
- ✓ No one else can open or look into this book, but Jesus has authority to take the book from the Father and possess it and fulfill it.
- ✓ There is a prophecy that anticipates this event: **Dan. 7:13-14**. The Son of Man — God who is genuine man — has complete authority over the world granted to Him by the Father.
- ✓ The prophecy in Daniel and the action in this verse demonstrate that Christ has the authority to enact the judgments in the book. He really is a sovereign Judge.
  - He is powerful to demonstrate His righteous wrath against sin.
  - And He is powerful to redeem and keep men from His wrath by applying His blood to them.
- ✓ He *will* take the book. He *will* open it. And He *will* judge men (beginning in 6:1; culminating with a final judgment with the Father in **20:11ff**).
  - There is accountability to this Lamb. No sinner will escape the One who sees all sin.
  - There is also grace from this Lamb who died to pay the penalty of your sin and to free you from the power of sin (**1:5**). But you must believe in Him.
  - You must believe that you are incapable to satisfy God with your inept attempts at righteousness.
  - You must believe that Christ did satisfy God's requirement of righteousness and that only by His death can your sin be washed away so that you are not accountable for it.
  - You must believe that He is worth living for in eternity, and *today*. He died to free us from sin (1:5) — you must believe that He is better than any sin.
  - Friend, I call you to repent (turn away from sin) and believe (turn to Him) for your life.

### **3. An EXULTATION: "The One Who is Worthy!" (vv. 8-14)**

- How does one respond to the Lamb? Because of His infinitely powerful work, all Heaven worships Him.
- Notice that the ***four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down...*** — In the OT, the sacrificial lamb is the means by which people worship, but the lamb itself is never worshipped.

- But in the NT, this Lamb not only gives the ability to worship, but He is also the object of worship!
  - ✓ They worship with **harps** — the most dominant instrument of praise in Scripture (cf. 14:2; 15:2).
  - ✓ They come with **bowls of incense** — these represent the prayers of redeemed men in Heaven and on earth, likely seeking the prophetic fulfillment of God’s promises. They want the Lamb.
- In worship they sing **a new song** —
  - ✓ In the OT, a new song was written and sung for the reception of new mercies (Ps. 33:3; 40:3; Is. 42:10). Here a new song is sung for the new (complete) redemption that came through Christ (14:3).
  - ✓ John says they **sing** (present tense) — the song is perpetual and ongoing — they sing today, they will sing when we enter Heaven, and they will sing in all the ages to come in Heaven.
- Notice the four elements (verses?) to the song they sing about His worthiness:
  - ✓ Christ **was slain** — He died a real death for sin (even though He was not guilty of any sin).
  - ✓ Christ **purchased redemption by His blood**, again emphasizing His sacrifice as the slain (exalted) Lamb (v. 6). And the redemption is for people from every part of the earth; no one is excluded based on language, ethnicity, or heritage. His blood is sufficient for any and all.
  - ✓ (Notice that this purchasing was done **for God** — to fulfill His plan and glorify Him, Jn. 6:37-40.)
  - ✓ The purchase of this redeemed people made them into God’s **Kingdom and priests** (1:5-6).
  - ✓ The ultimate end of this redemption is that His people will **reign** (rule) with Him in the MK — including judging sinners (Dan. 7:18, 27; Rev. 20:4).
  - ✓ This is the supremacy of the exalted Lamb who is infinitely worthy while we are infinitely incapable.
  - ✓ This is the full victory of the Son of Man, the Lion, the Root, the Lamb — and John (and we) long for the day of full consummation (even while we have experienced some blessings already).
- The song started with the 24 elders and the four living creatures around the Throne; in v. 11 it spreads to uncountable **angels** — **myriads...thousands** — perhaps indicating all of Heaven is singing. They are likely gathered around the four and 24 in concentric circles around the Throne in Heaven’s center.
  - ✓ The song sung in v. 12 is the worthiness of Christ to receive worship — the accumulation of His **power and riches and wisdom...** is that He is uniquely positioned to receive this worship.
  - ✓ There is no one worthy to do what He has done and no one worthy to receive worship, but Him.
  - ✓ Then in v. 13 the heavenly chorus is joined by an earthly chorus (v. 3; Phil. 2:9-11; Rom. 8:20-22).
  - ✓ And the **4 living creatures keep saying Amen** — “truly...” **All creation** declares Christ’s worthiness.
  - ✓ There is something also unique about this section. In Job 38:7, the angels sing at creation — the glory of God has been put on display. And by Genesis 3, sin intruded and the glory was “tarnished” briefly. After Job 38, we have no record of the angels singing. They speak at the Throne (Is. 6:3); they speak in unison at the birth of Christ (Lk. 2:13-14). But they do not appear to sing. Until here.
  - ✓ When the resurrected and exalted Christ is at His Throne and has taken the scroll from the Father, then the angels return to explode in praise and song. They delight in the consummation of God’s plan of redemption and the great expression of His glory through the slain and resurrected Lamb.

- You have come to worship on Resurrection Morning. What is the message of this chapter?
  - ✓ The resurrected **Lion** is able to give rightly judge all sin; no sin against you will be unpunished.
  - ✓ The resurrected **Lamb** is able to apply His blood to my sin and your sin so that we are freed from His judgement and our enslavement to sin.
  - ✓ The sin that has entangled us and ensnared us is not the final word in our lives.
  - ✓ If Christ is worthy of worship in eternity, then He is worth living for now. For Paul and us, “to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21). There are many false gods (idols); when you leave this earth, they will all always fail you. They are hopeless because they are powerless. Living for Christ may not be easy, but it will always ultimately be satisfying.
  - ✓ Be confident in the future. God is already **in the midst of the Throne** — He will rectify this world and He will lead us in eternity. Business and governments and families will fail here; Christ will never fail in any place. You can trust Him. He is resurrected and powerful.

**CONCLUSION:** In *the Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, C. S. Lewis seems to base one scene on Revelation 5:

“Between [the children] and the foot of the sky there was something so white on the green grass that even with their eagles’ eyes they could hardly look at it. They came on and saw that it was a Lamb.

“Come and have breakfast,” said the Lamb in its sweet milky voice.

Then they noticed for the first time that there was a fire lit on the grass and fish roasting on it. They sat down and ate the fish...and it was the most delicious food they had ever tasted.

“Please, Lamb,” said Lucy, “is this the way to Aslan’s [the Christ figure, appearing as a great Lion] country?”...

“There is a way into my country from all the worlds,” said the Lamb; but as he spoke his snowy white flushed into tawny gold and his size changed and he was Aslan himself, towering above them and scattering light from his mane....

[Then he said,] “I will not tell you how long or short the way will be; only that it lies across a river. But do not fear that, for I am the great Bridge Builder.” [Cited in Easley, *Revelation*, 89.]

What will we say about this slain, standing, exalted, Savior — the Lion who is the slain, exalted Lamb?

- ✓ He is worthy to redeem sinners.
- ✓ He is worthy to rule over unrepentant sinners.
- ✓ He is worthy of our worship and lives — now and in eternity.

**BENEDICTION:** Revelation 5:12-13