

## **The Lamb on the Throne (Revelation 5:1-14)**

The great throne room scene in heaven portrayed in Revelation 4 sets the stage for the remarkable drama of Revelation 5. As angels and people alike surround the throne of God offering their worship, God extends His hand and reveals a sealed scroll. In his vision of heaven John sees the scroll and hears a voice enquire, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?” Soon it becomes apparent that no one is worthy except Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. The Lamb takes His position on the divine throne and the drama unfolds as He receives the scroll and the hosts of heaven fall before Him in worship. Jesus is both a lion and a lamb. He is the King and our Redeemer. He is the Lamb who roared! Revelation 5 depicts the worthiness of Jesus Christ, the Lamb on the throne. From this passage we discover that people and angels alike find it irresistible to worship our worthy Lord, Jesus Christ. One day we’ll stand before the throne of God. We’ll witness the splendor of heaven and sense the awesome majesty of Jesus Christ. At that moment we’ll enter into a whole new appreciation of Jesus’ character and work. But before that day arrives we can catch a glimpse of this regal scene by examining Revelation 5. In this chapter John unfolds his vision by describing three movements in the drama, three distinct observations that he “saw” and that help us to see the glory of Jesus Christ.

**“And I saw a scroll”—  
When we see the throne room of God we will begin  
to understand that there are mysteries Christ alone can comprehend,  
that Christ alone is worthy to hold (5:1-5).**

First, John saw a scroll in the hand of God, along with a mighty angel proclaiming the powerful significance of this scroll. No one in heaven or on earth is worthy to open this scroll except Jesus Christ.

***The mysteries of God far surpass our limited minds (5:1).***

John describes a scroll that God holds in His right hand, the place of God’s authority. This scroll had writing on both sides, indicating the complete and comprehensive nature of its contents. Furthermore, the scroll had seven wax seals that preserved the authority of its contents. The only one who could legitimately break these seals and open this scroll was one to whom its contents belonged. But what were the contents of this scroll? Possibly it was a scroll filled with “words of lament and mourning and woe” like the scroll described in Ezekiel 2:9-10. Or maybe the scroll contained the official title deed to dominion over the earth, like the deed described in Jeremiah 32:6-15. More likely it contained the judgments described in the remainder of Revelation. Although we can’t declare with confidence the exact contents of this scroll in heaven, we can be sure that it refers to authority over the world and the right to judge sin, since each seal contains a specific judgment on the earth. The scroll does remind us that there are mysteries of God that far surpass our limited minds. God holds the future in His hands, and we can trust Him to accomplish His perfect plan for His creation.

***The mysteries of God far surpass our unworthy nature (5:2-4).***

In his vision, John saw a mighty angel who called out in a loud voice asking who was worthy to break the seals and open the scroll. Who had the character and authority required by an all-powerful and holy God to receive this scroll from His hand? It quickly became apparent that no one in all creation was worthy to open this scroll and examine its contents. This fact caused John to weep. Sin has so corrupted the human heart that no one deserves to enter into the mysteries of God. God far surpasses our unworthy nature. He is greater in power, in glory, in every way. Like John we should grieve over our sins and look again to God for His grace and mercy toward His creation.

***The mysteries of God belong to Jesus Christ (5:5).***

As John wept he heard one of the elders—most likely representing redeemed people in this throne room scene—speak up and declare that there was indeed one person who was worthy to receive the scroll. The mysteries of God the Father belong to this one man, the God-man, Jesus Christ. The elder described Jesus as the “Lion” from the tribe of Judah and the “Root” of King David. These terms referred to the messianic expectations of the Jewish people. The Messiah would descend from the royal tribe of Judah like a lion, great in power and regal majesty (see Genesis 49:9-10). The Messiah would also be a descendant of David, but more than that, a root from which David’s line would grow and prosper. Isaiah 11:10 describes the Messiah in this way. Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, was alone worthy to receive the scroll from God the Father. To Him belong the mysteries of God.

**“And I saw a Lamb”—  
When we see the Lord Jesus Christ we will begin  
to understand that Christ’s redeeming work should strike our hearts  
with fear, our lips with praise (5:6-10).**

The second movement of this heavenly drama involves John’s observation of the Lion, who in reality looked like a little lamb. While Jesus is a Lion in regard to His authority over creation, He is the sacrificial Lamb when it comes to accomplishing our redemption.

***Jesus is the Lamb of God who died for our sins (5:6).***

The elder had told John to look and see the Lion who was worthy to receive the scroll from the right hand of God the Father. As John turned he saw not a Lion but a little Lamb. This Lamb, standing in the middle of the throne of God, appeared to have been slain. It apparently still bore the marks of its sacrificial death. This Lamb, surrounded by four unusual angelic beings and a group of elders, was none other than Jesus Christ. John described Him as having seven horns, symbols of power and authority. The Lamb also possessed seven eyes, symbols of wisdom and knowledge. These seven eyes were associated with the seven-fold, or perfect, Holy Spirit of God who goes out into all the earth to testify to the saving work of the Lamb. Jesus Christ is a Lion, holding regal authority. He is also a Lamb, offering salvation through His sacrificial death on the cross. Our salvation depends on our relationship with the Lamb of God.

If we have placed our faith in Jesus Christ to deliver us from our sins we can stand before God as forgiven and holy, made worthy because of the worthiness of our Savior.

***Jesus is the Lamb of God who redeemed people of every nation (5:7-9).***

The Lamb took the scroll that God the Father offered Him, and then took His position on the throne in full authority over creation. At this the heavenly witnesses fell down in reverence and worship before the Lamb. With harps, or lyres, to accompany their song and with incense, or prayers, to express their worship these witnesses “sang a new song” of Jesus Christ’s redeeming love. They declared that the Lamb is worthy to receive the scroll and open its seals, to activate its judgments. The Lamb is worthy because of His work of redemption. With His blood the Lamb purchased humankind for God. (Most Greek manuscripts say that the Lamb purchased “us” for God, indicating that humans were among the witnesses in heaven singing the new song of redemption.) People from every nation now have the opportunity to come to God through faith in Jesus Christ. The Lamb has provided redemption for all—every tribe and tongue and people group, and nation.

***Jesus is the Lamb of God who elevates us to positions of undeserved honor (5:10).***

The new song continues with the declaration that those who have received Jesus Christ as their Savior have been elevated to positions of undeserved honor. The Lamb on the throne has made us to be “a kingdom” and “priests” who serve our God and who will reign on the earth. Because of our sin, we are unworthy to receive the scroll from the hand of God. But because of Jesus’ death on the cross we are now declared worthy to rule with Him. We belong to His eternal kingdom and we serve as priests who have direct access to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. The Lamb on the throne has made it possible for us to be relieved of our sins and to receive undeserved honor in the sight of Almighty God.

**“And I saw a multitude”—  
When we see the throngs of heaven we will begin  
to understand that there is no greater privilege than to worship Christ,  
no greater fulfillment than to be in His presence (5:11-14).**

As the third movement of the drama unfolds, John sees a multitude surrounding the throne of heaven and offering worship to the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. From this movement we learn that there can be no greater privilege or satisfaction in life than to offer heartfelt praise to our Lord.

***One day we will join countless myriads in heaven in worshipping Christ (5:11).***

John heard the voices of countless angels—myriads upon myriads, and thousands upon thousands—along with the voices of the four unusual angelic beings and the twenty-four elders as they surrounded the throne and worshiped the Lamb. This is the reality of heaven, and one day we will join with the throngs of heaven to worship our Savior and our God.

***One day we will sing a new song in worshiping Christ (5:12-13).***

The hosts of heaven sang a wonderful song of worship, a song that we will one day sing to our Lord in heavenly glory. The words of this song as recorded by John offer praise to Jesus Christ who is the worthy Lamb of God. “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” This seven-fold declaration of Jesus’ righteous character reminds us that we’re to worship Him in the fullness of His attributes. We’re to acknowledge that Jesus possesses any power and wealth that we think we possess. He is the source of all wisdom and strength. All honor and glory and praise belong to Him. This mighty chorus in heaven was then joined by every voice in all creation—every being in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea. Every angelic being and every human being will ultimately declare the greatness of Jesus Christ and God the Father. “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power for ever and ever!”

***One day we will fall down in reverence in worshiping Christ (5:14).***

At this grand climax, John heard the four unusual angelic beings shout “Amen” and he saw the twenty-four elders fall down before the throne and worship. What John saw in his vision is the reality of heaven both now and in the future. One day we will fall down in reverence in the presence of Jesus Christ and worship Him as He truly is, the worthy Lamb of God.

It’s difficult—even impossible—for us to imagine what it will be like for us to stand among that mighty chorus in heaven and declare the greatness of our Lord. We will certainly begin to understand that there is no greater privilege than to worship Jesus Christ. We’ll doubtless begin to grasp in at least a limited way the great blessing of being in the presence of Almighty God. But in order to experience this joy and splendor throughout eternity we must first come to Jesus Christ by faith. Here, now, we must acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord. Here, now, we must confess our sins to Him and receive eternal life from His gracious hand. The Lamb on the Throne invites us to enter into worship. He invites us to enter into life. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain!