

Revelation Chapter 5
Lecture 16
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A very belated happy 2022 to each of you. I'm looking forward to what the Lord has in store for us this year. Have you ever entered into a conversation, picked up a book, or started watching a movie mid-stream? I'm pretty methodical, so for me to fully appreciate what I'm listening to or watching, it helps to understand where we are in the story. Since we are already in chapter 5 with today's lesson, I'm going to provide a quick synopsis of how we got to this point. The Apostle John, the co-author with the Holy Spirit of this incredible book of Revelation, has been banished to the isle of Patmos – located in the Aegean Sea between Greece and Turkey. Most historians state the Roman emperor, Domitian, sent him there in a move to quash his considerable Christian influence. In chapter 1, verse 9, John affirms the cause for being on Patmos due to the word of God and his testimony of Jesus Christ. John is believed to be around 90 at the time of writing this book – about the same time in the Gregorian calendar – sometime between 90-100 A.D. At the end of this lecture, I'll revisit John's circumstances.

Because I'm pretty methodical, I greatly appreciate the grace of the Lord providing an outline to the book of Revelation. This outline is found in verse 19 of chapter 1 with Jesus saying to John, "*Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.*" The outline consists of three segments:

1. *The things which you have seen* – this is chapter 1 – John being in the Spirit and transported into the presence of the risen and glorified Jesus Christ.
2. *The things which are* – these are chapters 2 & 3 – they comprise the church age
3. *The things which will take place after this* – this makes up the rest of the book of Revelation speaking to the future.

As Carol covered so wonderfully in Chapter 1, we've provided an awesome description of the glorified Jesus – the things which John has seen. Cheri and Dellena did a great job covering Jesus' words to the 7 churches – the things which are. Last week, my friend Steve Mood talked about the opening Greek words to chapter 4 - *meta tauta*. *Meta* means after, and *tauta* means these things. Therefore, if Chapter 4 begins with "After these things," we must ask after *what*

things? I believe these “things” are the church age. The word “after” implies these things are in the past, so this is how we can conclude that chapters 2 and 3 fulfill the second segment of Christ’s outline for the book of Revelation.

Therefore, with chapters 4 and 5, we commence with the third segment of the outline – the things which will take place after this. These two chapters are connected - they are an interlude before the fireworks begin in chapter 6 and will continue until chapter 19. These two chapters present awesome drama, and I have some exciting news for you later in this lecture regarding this drama.

Beginning with verse 1, John presented a visual, *“And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.”* The word “throne” is a keyword in the book of Revelation - it is used forty-six times. In this verse, the one who is sitting on the throne is God the Father. We can say this with certainty because of Who we are introduced to in the next few verses. The Father is holding a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. The fact that it was written on the inside and the back, there would be nothing left to add. What was written on it was final and complete.

What is this scroll? Most commentators agree this scroll is the “titled deed” to the earth. Initially, a title deed was written only on one side of the scroll. However, if an owner was unable to pay his debts, he would have to relinquish the title deed. The debts would be documented on the back side, the deed rolled up, and then sealed with seven seals. If at any time during the ensuing seven years he could pay off his debts, the seals would be broken and the deed returned. All of humanity’s sin are debts that cannot be paid without the blood of the Lamb, so the title deed the Father is holding contains the sin debt of humanity. These seals cannot be opened until the sin debt is paid. Only one Man – Jesus Christ – is qualified to pay the sin debt of humanity; therefore, He alone is qualified to open the seals.

A title deed is a testimony of ownership. When Adam and Eve were created, they were given the earth to have dominion over it. When they sinned, they spiritually handed over the title deed to the earth to Satan, and he has been in possession of it ever since. Don’t believe that? When Satan was tempting Jesus in the wilderness, Satan took the Lord to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. He then said to Jesus, *“All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.”* Satan can’t give something that he doesn’t have. More importantly, Jesus didn’t debate the statement that Satan was in possession of

all the kingdoms. God is ultimately in control, but Satan is the author of all the misery in this world.

In Biblical times, a title deed or will could only be opened by the appointed heir. Jesus Christ is the only rightful heir. Let's look at some Scriptures that testify to this:

In Psalm 2:8, we have the Father speaking to the Son, *"Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession."*

Hebrews 1:2 confirmed Jesus as the Father's heir, *"has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds."*

In the books of Leviticus, Ruth, and Jeremiah, we learn of a position known as the Kinsman Redeemer. In the event a direct family member was unable to care for his/her dependents due to death or other circumstance, they would look for a Kinsman Redeemer to take the responsibility of the dependent's care. The redeemer had to be: 1) near of kin; 2) willing to redeem, and 3) able to redeem. Jesus Christ meets these three criteria. He became flesh, so He was like one of us – our Kinsman. John 3:16 proves that Jesus was both willing and able to redeem – *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*

In verse 2, a strong angel asked a question that was initially met with silence, *"Who is worthy to open the scroll and loose the seals?"* Notice the angel didn't ask *"Who wants to?"* or *"Who is willing?"* Alexander the Great, Genghis Kahn, Charlemagne, Napoleon, and Hitler were all willing and wanted to be in control of the entire world. They all failed. That is why the significance of the word *"worthy."* The title deed was what was promised to Jesus because of His sacrifice on the cross. Only He is worthy to take this deed, because He did all that the Father required to take it back from Satan.

With no one responding to the angel's question, John broke down, and for the first time in heaven, there were tears. He simply could not comprehend the idea of a world not delivered from the power of Satan. I can completely relate to John's reaction. I personally don't know how people who don't know Jesus, function – especially in these times. The rate of moral descent and disregard for God in this world is escalating day-by-day with fewer and fewer efforts of resistance from the church. Jesus is our only hope. With the church's unwillingness to stand up for the totality of God's character and His standards, all that is left is to watch Satan spread his lies and see more and more of the world come into agreement with them. What breaks my heart

is so much of the church is joining the non-believers in their dismissal of God from our consciousness. This is 100% due to the Word of God and all its truths not being relentlessly taught providing what we need to ward off the lies. God bless you all for your diligence in this study.

One of the twenty-four elders encouraged John and begins the introduction of the One who is worthy to take the scroll and break the seals. The elder says to John in verse 5, *“Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.”* We’ve seen Jesus is the rightful heir, and now He is also defined as the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Root of David. The Lion of the tribe of Judah takes us back to Genesis 49 where Jacob prophetically gave the scepter to Judah and made it the tribe of kings. Jesus’ lineage to Judah makes Him qualified to be a king, and we know a lion is known as the king of the beasts.

As the Root of David, we go back to Isaiah 11, and we learn that there shall come forth a rod from the stem of Jesse (David’s father) and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. (v. 1) There will be a Root of Jesse, *“Who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious.”* (v. 11) The words *“has prevailed”* in verse 5 should be of great comfort to all of us. This is a past tense phrase – meaning the situation is resolved. When Jesus said, *“It is finished”*, He meant He had satisfied *all* that the Father had required because of His sacrifice for the sins of every believer. There is nothing more for us to do in the salvation process other than to believe this to be true. Jesus *has* prevailed. *He* won the victory over spiritual death. Can I get a hallelujah?

In verse 6, John sees in the midst of the throne and in the midst of the elders – because that’s where Jesus always is – He is in heaven, He is on the throne, and He’s in the midst of everything. Yet, we don’t see a lion, do we? We see a Lamb as though it has been slain. One of the things I’ve thought about many times is what Jesus will look like when I meet Him face-to-face. This Scripture indicates when I see Jesus, He will still be bearing the marks of His sacrifice for my sins. I don’t know how I will be able to either stand or look at Him without feeling the sting that He looks like that because of me.

Verse 6 continues the description of Jesus, *“having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.”* I hope you recall that the number seven is significant in Scripture – it means completeness. Horns are symbolic for power, so Jesus

having seven horns indicates His perfect power. The seven eyes, which are the Spirits of God speak to the fullness of God's omnipotence – His vision through all of eternity - and Spirit. I like the comparison J. Vernon McGee offers of Jesus as the Lamb and Jesus as the Lion.

Jesus as the Lamb	Jesus as the Lion
Speaks to His first coming	Speaks to His second coming
A symbol of His meekness	Speaks to His majesty
He's a Savior	He is Sovereign
He is judged	He is the judge
The grace of God	The government of God

In verse 7, God the Son takes the scroll from God the Father. Imagine the drama of this moment. With this one action, the four living creatures, and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb with their bowls of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. They begin to worship. This should be the natural response to the certainty of God's presence. For all His goodness, for all His love, for all His mercy, for all His righteousness, for all His power – we are to worship Him. We are to praise Him. We are to give thanks to Him endlessly for all He has done, is doing, and will do for us.

Verses 9-10 provide the lyrics to this worship song, and we need to pay close attention to what they are saying.

*“You are worthy to take the scroll,
And to open its seals;
For You were slain,
And have redeemed us to God by Your blood
Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,
And have made us kings and priests to our God;
And we shall reign on the earth.”*

We've covered the first two lines, but the next two lines, *"For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood."* Brothers and sisters, who can sing these words? *Only* the church can sing these words. What does that mean? The church is in heaven at this moment in eternity. Think about it – are we not all part of the church? Are you getting it? When you go to the movies, what do you see before the movie starts? Coming attractions – snippets from upcoming movies to give you a flavor of the movie. The scene laid out in Chapters 4 and 5 are a sneak preview of something that every member of the church is going to see. Brothers and sisters, we are reading about something each of us is actually going to be in attendance for!!!

Warren Wiersbe points out that this hymn is all-in-one:

- A Gospel hymn – the 3rd and 4th verses
- A missionary hymn – *"out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation"*
- A devotional hymn – *"have made us kings and priests to our God"*
 - 1 Peter 2:5-10 speak to the church being a kingdom of priests.
- A prophetic hymn – *"we shall reign on the earth."* (Revelation 20:6)

In verses 11-14, the worship continues, and everyone – the angels around the throne, the four living creatures, and the elders – the numbers are over 100 million (10,000 times 10,000). All in one accord they sing:

*"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
To receive power and riches and wisdom,
And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"*

Jesus was slain, but because He was slain, He receives power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing. Did you happen to count the number of things Jesus received as a result of His sacrifice? Seven – the complete reward for His suffering. Finally, what is the message regarding Jesus in the words in verse 13?

*"Blessing and honor and glory and power
Be to Him who sits on the throne,
And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"*

These words demonstrate Jesus' Deity – His rightful position as a co-equal member of the triune Godhead. The chapter concludes with the four living creatures saying, "*Amen!*" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshipped Him who lives forever and ever. There's a lot of worship in this chapter, and there should be. Worthy is the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world!

With the end of chapter 5, we conclude this interlude of praise and worship. While I love and respect my brothers and sisters who think otherwise, this scene in chapters 4 & 5 is one of the clearest testimonies in Scripture to the pre-tribulation rapture. With *meta tauta* beginning chapter 4 – after these things – the things of the church age, we're given a scene that *only* the church can sing the hymnal lyrics. Starting with chapter 6, the seven-year tribulation commences as Jesus opens the seven seals of judgment. J. Vernon McGee made this astute observation, "*Jesus judges the world in righteousness before He reigns in righteousness.*"

Before I get to my closing, I want to give you all something to chew on – I promise there's a link to today's reading – just bear with me for a minute or two. We have been in this pandemic for almost two years. In my opinion, this pandemic is a form of judgment on a non-believing world, but I'm also growing more convinced another reason for the pandemic is to discipline, or course-correct, the church. I cannot tell you how many times I have heard someone say something to the effect, "*I just want things to get back to normal.*" I've said this myself.

Here's my question – what if the "normal" we want is something God wasn't ok with? I'll leave it between each of you and God to engage in that conversation on how that may or may not apply to you. What I want to focus on is the issue of *worship*. When I read through this chapter, this is one of the most powerful moments of worship in all the Bible. There are three common themes in this scene.

1. Jesus is the unquestioned and complete focus of the worship. There is no praise band, choir, or carefully crafted and developed spectacle to elevate the emotion and visual of worship. In today's reading, the only spectacle in this worship scene is the wonder of the presence of the Lamb of God. Yes, I know this scene is in Heaven, but via the power of the Holy Spirit, I am believing the unmistakable power of the presence of God is available here on earth. If you recall, how was John transported into this scene? He was in the Spirit. One of the great tragedies of most Christian's lives is their unwillingness to tap into the power of the Holy Spirit that is made available to every believer. Jesus said in

John 14:12: “*Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.*” He is speaking to us – followers of Christ, but we can’t do these greater works without the power of God. Where do we get this power? Zechariah 4:6 tells us, “*Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, ’ says the LORD of hosts.*” Loved ones, there is nothing more powerful, compelling, and satisfying than being in the presence of the Lord by His Spirit. The question is, do we want this? Church leaders take the position that such audacious productions are necessary to “bring in the numbers.” Well, if the worship is so focused on the presentation, rather than His presence, what are the people really there for? Worship is not about entertainment; it is about focused devotion on and elevation of Jesus.

2. There is absolute unity among all the participants – even the highest order of angels and elders are in complete devotion and participation in the worship. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve seen a pastor or elder, *during* worship, drinking their coffee, checking on the worship service’s logistics, or studying his sermon. What kind of witness is that? If the leaders aren’t joining in worship, why should the congregants? Also, do you see any pride in any of the people in today’s reading? They are all humbled and awed by the presence of God – their humbleness is a uniting factor in their worship.
3. There is a confession that Jesus alone is worthy. Do we truly believe that? I know I wouldn’t be teaching His Word if it weren’t for Jesus. Nobody reading this or in this room would be here if it weren’t for Jesus dying on a cross for my and yours sins. Remember the question in today’s reading? “*Who is worthy to take the scroll?*” Brothers and sisters, the Word of God *alone* is worthy of worship. Please spend some time meditating on the worthiness of Jesus.

Before I get to my conclusion, I wanted to share a poem that seeks to sum up Revelation Chapter 5.

In a twinkling of an eye, we are transported
To God’s great and awesome throne.
No longer pilgrims in a strange land
But citizens in our promised home.

We have all come standing together
United through the blood of Christ.
Bathed in His completed healing
In awe of God's glory and light.

A mighty angel calls out to the crowd,
"Who is worthy to take the scroll?"
A deafening silence falls upon heaven
Knowing the answer is nary a soul.

For the first time in all of eternity,
Tears are echoing in heaven's halls.
Yet an elder offers his encouragement
"There is One worthy - One who gave His all."

Our eyes become transfixed on the throne -
On the One who is both Lion and Lamb.
He takes the scroll from God the Father
And holds it in His nail-pierced hands.

The angels, living creatures, and elders
Fall to their knees with the prayers of the saints
That requested the defeat of all their enemies -
For which now there would be no more delay.

But before the Lamb would open a seal,
The congregation had a new song to sing,
"You alone are worthy to take the scroll,
Oh, our great and glorious King!"

"For you were slain for the sins of the world
And have redeemed us by Your blood.
Out of every tribe, tongue, and nation,
You have proven Your grace is enough."

"You have made us kings and priests to our God,
And we shall reign with You on earth.
But not before the seven seals are opened
And the fulfillment of Your prophetic Word."

Once again, we break out in song,
"Blessing, honor, glory, and power
Be to Him who sits on the throne
And to the Lamb for ever and ever."

The twenty-four elders fell to their knees
And worshipped and cried, "Amen!"
Behold the Lamb of God as He opens
The seals as the Day of Judgment begins.

I mentioned early in this lecture about the suffering John experienced. Church history tells us while John wasn't martyred, it wasn't because they didn't try. He was boiled in oil, but he survived – no doubt because the Lord had more in mind for him – to write his gospel, his epistles, and Revelation. As I thought about this some more, the majority of the New Testament was written by men who suffered greatly for the sake of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. Jesus told Ananias when instructing him to heal the as-yet apostle Paul of his blindness as a result of his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus, *"For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."* (Acts 9:12) Jesus, in speaking of Himself said, *"The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day."* (Luke 9:22)

My point is while suffering is indeed very painful, in the Kingdom of God, it can bring enormous blessing. Christ crucified introduced the hope that righteous suffering yields blessings beyond our expectations. Peter said in his first epistle, *"But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed."* (1 Peter 3:14a) Brothers and sisters, it is my opinion that we are in the last of the last days. The Bible speaks to a falling away of the church as a precursor to Jesus' return (2 Thessalonians 2:3). I believe that falling away has commenced. The decaying morality of our culture is in direct conflict with Biblical values. For those who choose to stand firm on Who and what we believe, we should *expect* persecution and suffering. It's not going to be easy, but the scene described in these last two chapters, that we will be there for, will make every ounce of suffering we experience worth it. This is one of the reasons one of my life verses is Romans 8:18, *"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."*

I'm certain many of you are suffering at this very moment. Whether it's your health, your financial situation, your spiritual condition, or the lingering effects of living in a pandemic, I would expect many of you are weary and needing some hope. I encourage you to dig deep into God's Word and find the assurances of His Lordship and Him being your Good Shepherd. When we're suffering, we may not feel like Jesus is there, but I can assure you He is. *His* suffering

produced incredible blessings. Hang in there, loved ones. I'm believing for you He will do the same for you in your sufferings. Let's pray.