

is worth it. You might wonder if all you do in the life of the church really matters. You might wonder if there is a point. John's revelation reminds us that without Jesus all is lost but do not weep, do not lose hope, Jesus has triumphed.

John reminds us that Jesus is Lord and worthy of praise. What we find in of the utmost importance. Jesus in Chapter 5 is exactly where the God of creation is found in the throne room in Chapter 4. The same praise that was reserved for God on God's throne in Chapter 4 is not extended to Jesus in Chapter 5. In fact, because of Jesus the worship expands. Notice what happens. The worship begins like Chapter 4, but angels by the tens of thousands join in and not only angels but then every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, on the sea and in the sea praising God and Jesus.

I think this has something to do with John's proclamation of person and lordship of Jesus. God's revelation of self had been through God's creation, the living creatures, through God's people, the church, and the elders. But in Jesus, God's revelation is full and complete. God's love and plan of redemption was complete and for all. Remember the new song, "You purchased men for God from every tribe, language, people and nation"? In Jesus, God's revelation and plan of salvation is complete and full. It is for all people, for all time who will receive God's mercy and salvation. Jesus is Lord and thus, Jesus is worthy of our praise.

As I close let me make one more comment, and that is praise is contagious. One of the striking aspects of Chapter 5 is the expanding nature of worship. It begins with a new song and soon the song expands and the participants expand until everyone is praising Jesus. Praise must begin with me. Praise must begin with you. Praise must begin with us.

A number of years ago Orel Hershiser was pitching for the Los Angeles Dodgers. They had just won the World Series, & Orel had been named "The most valuable player of the series."

One of the TV shows about the series showed him in the dugout just before the 9th inning started. He was leaning against the wall & his lips were moving. It was obvious that he was saying something to himself.

So when he was a guest on the Tonight Show, Johnny Carson asked him what he had been saying. "I wasn't saying anything," Orel responded. "Well, then, tell us what you were doing." Finally Orel replied, "I was

singing."

"You were singing?" Johnny said. "I didn't know you were a singer." "Aw," Orel said, "I'm not." Johnny persisted, "What were you singing? Sing it for us now." "Nah, I don't want to sing." But by that time the audience was chiming in with "C'mon, sing it, sing it to us!"

Finally, Orel Hirschheiser started to sing, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him all creatures here below." And Johnny Carson was speechless. The whole audience was dead silent. Then one person started clapping, and soon the whole audience joined in applause.

Jesus is the Risen one- worthy of worship and praise. Praise God for God's splendor and power. Praise God for God's mercy. Praise God for without Jesus we are surely lost. Praise Jesus for Jesus is Lord. Praise the Lord and Worship Him alone for Jesus is worthy of our worship. Let the praise begin with me.



TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH  
RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA

# Jesus - Worthy of Worship

Revelation 5:1-14



Can you think of a moment when you felt the glory of God was revealed to you? For some of us it might have been through an experience with God's marvelous creation. It might have been sitting on the seashore and watching a glorious sunrise or sunset. It could have been in the mountains somewhere and coming around a bend and seeing a mountain range a flamed with color in the autumn. It could have been looking into the face of your newborn baby after experiencing the miracle of birth and new life. It could have been holding the hand and looking into the eyes of a loved one as they took their final breath.

All of these moments are glimpses of God's glory and goodness. They are partial revelations of the ever present and working Spirit of God. Last week, we spoke of how those of John's day were facing increasing persecution and Revelation was a word of encouragement and hope to them and also to us. We discovered that in their time of persecution God was saying to them, "I have a word for you." That word was grace and peace. In a time when they were wondering if the victory won on the cross was a victory at all, God's revelation to John was a reminder that Jesus is alive and victorious. We could count on God's power, character and future.

The next several chapters in Revelation are words of instruction, warning and hope to the seven churches in Asia who were experiencing this time of persecution. When we arrive to chapters 4 and 5 of Revelation we get a new experience. Up until this time John is on the Isle of Patmos and on the Isle of Patmos he is receiving a vision or revelation from God through the risen Christ. Now in Chapter 4 and 5 John is transported to very throne room of heaven.

In the Bible we find many ways of describing moments of revelation from God. Many times it is described as a vision. Sometimes it is described as something occurring in a dream. Still there are other times that the revelation is described in terms of a spiritual journey. Jesus takes a spiritual journey in two of His

temptations. He is transported to a place where He can see all the kingdoms of the world at one time. He is also transported to the Temple where He is tempted to throw Himself off the highest point and be rescued by God. Paul has an experience that he has a hard time describing. He says of his journey, whether out of the body or in the body, I am not sure. Paul just knows he is shown things that you don't normally see as he is taken into the "third heaven."

Now John is transported into the very throne room of God. In Chapter 4 we have the description of John's transportation. He writes it was like a door standing open and an invitation to come up and be shown what must take place. John continually lets us know that this whole process is God's doing. He is not forcing his way into heaven. God is inviting him. The door is standing open. It is an invitation to come and see. We are reminded that God is a revealing God. All we know about God is not of our own effort, but of God's mercy and grace in God's revealing. God is a self-revealing God.

John travels into heaven and the first description we find in Chapter 4 is that of God and those who surround God. One writer has said that Revelation 4 and 5 are not to be studied, but experienced. It is like for us to go to a concert or a play and then come back and try to describe the experience to a friend. It is hard to describe the emotions, the images, and the moments that we experience. The Revelation of John is much like this experience. The description of God, the throne room and all involved are in many ways beyond words and normal images. They are magnificent and glorious and so is John's description of what he sees.

Let's Read it together and try to experience it.

<sup>1</sup>After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."  
<sup>2</sup>At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. <sup>3</sup>And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A

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rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. <sup>4</sup>Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. <sup>5</sup>From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. <sup>6</sup>Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. <sup>7</sup>The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. <sup>8</sup>Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty," <sup>9</sup>who was, and is, and is to come." <sup>9</sup>Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, <sup>10</sup>the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: <sup>11</sup>"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

What an incredible scene John sees. He sees God on the throne, but it is hard to even describe God. John says of God's appearance was like jasper and ruby and a rainbow encircled the throne. John describes God with stones that are both brilliant and permanent. God is splendid, glorious and eternal. In addition there is this mention of a rainbow. Many suggest that the rainbow, which of course is a sign of God's mercy and grace, surrounds the throne. The one who is eternal, glorious is also merciful and full of grace. What an incredible picture of God. There is also a description of a sea of glass. Much has been made of this sea, but I would say it is a picture of God's peace. In the ancient world, the sea was mysterious and filled with evil and chaos. Here is a sea, but it is like glass. No tumultuous chaos, but peace.

There are also twenty-four elders who are dressed in white and they have golden crowns on their heads. They sit on thrones. We are told in Chapter 5 they have harps and bowls of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. The best way I know how to describe the elders is the whole of the church. The fullness of God's people. Some suggest it is the combination of the 12 Tribes of Judah and the 12 Apostles. Others suggest it is the representation of the God's people being the Jewish people and then the Gentile Church. The elders have a function of worship, intercession and representation.

In addition, there are the four living creatures. The four living creatures described by John have a similar description of the cherubim described by Ezekiel. The term creatures and their description is not a fair

interpretation of the word Revelation. The term creature should better be translated for our thinking beings. What we find are four living beings. Their description sound odd to us. In Ezekiel the description is even stranger to us. In Ezekiel's description of the Cherubim, they are living creatures with each having four faces with the same description here in Revelation. Ezekiel mentions four wings, where John speaks of six wings. In each description there are these multiple eyes.

Most scholars suggest that the living beings or creatures represent God's creation. The lion, the greatest of the wild world, the ox, the greatest of the domesticated animals, the eagle as the greatest of the air and of course man as the crowning act of creation. The four living creatures praise without rest is what the word means. They praise without rest with those wonderful words Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come. When they begin to worship, the elders join in the worship and they exclaim a song of worship, which is to give glory to God for God's creation. Notice the words of 4:11; they are about God's creative acts. John sees the throne room of God and God is brilliant, eternal and worthy to be praised by all of creation.

However, in Chapter 5 the worship takes a turn. There is a scroll that is in the right hand of God and it has seven seals. The scroll has writing on both sides and there is information that needs to be shared but no one is worthy to open the scroll. God looks for any of his creatures and for anyone in all creation to open the scroll, but there is no one who is worthy to open the scroll. John wept because there is no one to open the scroll.

Then one of the elders gives testimony. Do not weep for there is one who is worthy. Then we have a description of Jesus. The lion of Judah, the root of David has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and the seven seals. Then John describes Jesus further. Jesus is described as the lamb that was slain who is now standing in the center of the throne room encircled by the same ones who encircle the very throne of God.

What is being described here? Jesus is God. Jesus, the one who was crucified, was the lamb and the innocent one who was slain, but now He stands at the center of the throne room of God. Because He is the lamb that was slain and because He is the resurrected living Lord, He alone is worthy to receive the scroll and open it.

Notice what happens in this moment. The cherubim begin to praise Jesus and the elders, who encircle the throne, performed the same act of worship as they did toward God in Chapter 4. Here is the difference. They sing a new song. Remember the first song was of God's greatness as creator. God is the God of all things the creator of all things.

Now, the song changes. It is a song of God's salvation and mercy. To Jesus they sing:

*You are worthy because You were slain and with Your blood You purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom of Priests to serve our God and they will reign on the earth.*

Then all of heaven joins in praise. Angels, thousands upon thousands and ten thousands upon ten thousand, encircled the throne and encircled the living beings and the elders and sang praises to Jesus. Then the worship expands to every creature in heaven and on the earth and on the sea and all that is in them praising God and Jesus.

To him that sits on the throne and to the Lamb we praise Honor and glory and power for ever and ever. The elders and the living beings said Amen. Let it be, or so be it.

What an incredible depiction of the throne room of heaven and the praise and worship of God. As we began this series last week, I said we must seek to understand this message to John's recipients so we can understand it for us. Today, thinking about this incredible image of praise and worship, let me offer four brief thoughts about the praise of Jesus... the Risen One.

We discover in John's revelation that God is worthy of praise for God is on the throne. The people of John's day were wondering if God had vacated the throne of heaven. They knew Caesar was on his throne and the way things were going around them they were wondering if God was still on His throne.

Have you ever gone into a business and there is no one to be seen. The door is open, the lights are on and you look around and you might ring the bell on the desk and even call out is anyone here. You wonder in those moments is "anyone home?" Is anyone in charge? Or you might go into your office and it seems that it is just chaos. You wonder to your self is anyone in charge? So, it is with the ancients and us when life turns out different than we expected. We might even say to God, "are you there? Or do you hear my prayers?"

Notice John's response in Revelation. The door is open to heaven and John sees what we must see by faith. God is on the throne. Not only is God on the throne, but also God is in charge. There is order and there is awareness in all of creation that God is God. Not only does creation know, but also God's people know that God is God. Does God hear our prayers? Yes, our prayers are presented in the very presence of God. That is the message to those

THE REMINDER THAT GOD WORKS THROUGH AND WITH THOSE WHO ARE HUMBLE, THOSE WHO ARE WEAK, AND THOSE WHO ARE POWERLESS WAS A GREAT WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT. GOD WILL BE MERCIFUL THROUGH CHRIST. SO THIS WORD IS FOR US. WE ARE NOT STRONG IN AND OF OUR SELF. WE ARE WEAK, WE ARE SINFUL, WE HAVE FAILED, WE ARE LOST... BUT GOD IS MERCIFUL. PRAISE GOD!

of John's day and to us. God is God and thus worthy to be praised.

Secondly, John reminds us that God is worthy of praise because of God's mercy. What I find so interesting in these chapters are the references to God's mercy. Yes, God is described in incredible powerful images, but also in terms of weakness and humility. In the first chapter there is the picture of God as splendid and eternal, but what surrounds the throne is the rainbow or mercy. God holds the scroll that is the revelation of judgments to come, but God does not simply open the scroll and declare the judgments. God instead, looks for someone

worthy to open the scroll. John Piper suggests that this is an act of mercy.

If God had opened the scroll and pronounced judgment upon a fallen, sinful and rebellious world there would have not been anything left. However, God will not open the scroll without a savior. They look for a savior and only one is worthy to stand and open scroll of judgment. It is the one who is the savior. The one who is described in terms of innocence, humility, and weakness. It is the one who is described as a lion and a lamb all at the same time. It is the one who has purchased men and women for God through His sacrifice. God is

worthy of our praise not only for God's glory, but also for God's mercy.

For those in John's day, the word of mercy was important. The reminder that God works through and with those who are humble, those who are weak, and those who are powerless was a great word of encouragement. God will be merciful through Christ. So this word is for us. We are not strong in and of our self. We are weak, we are sinful, we have failed, we are lost... but God is merciful. Praise God!

A third reminder is without Jesus there is no praise. One of the most poignant moments is when John cries because no one is found to open the scroll. The scroll is going to be a revelation of what is to come and what should be expected, but now there is no one worthy to open it. John writes "And I wept and wept." There is an expression of deep sorrow and a sense of grief. There is a sense of loss and of hope. I wept and I wept. Without Jesus there is no hope. Without Jesus there is no answer. Without Jesus there is nothing but mourning, grief, lostness, and hopelessness. In some ways we might say John wept and wept because what was the point. All seemed lost.

Then the elder said, "Do not weep see the Lion of Judah, the root of David has triumphed." Listen my friends... there might be times when you wonder if following Jesus