

O Worship The Redeemer

Revelation 5

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I want to refer you to Revelation 1:19, as we introduce chapter 5. John is giving the key to the book of Revelation. He is told to “Write the things which you have seen...”—that’s Revelation chapter 1 of Christ in His Second Coming glory—“...and the things which are...”—that’s chapters 2 and 3, the voice of Christ to the seven churches—“...and the things which will take place after this”—or “meta tauta,” which is chapters 4-22. We just got our feet wet in Revelation by spending time in chapters 1-4, and now we’ll cover chapter 5.

By chapter 5, the church had already been caught up to heaven. In chapter 4, John said that he heard a voice in heaven, saw a door open and a voice which said, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this” or “meta tauta.” So I’m a firm believer that the church has been “caught up...to meet the Lord in the air.” We will be in heaven when God’s wrath, or the wrath of the Lamb, will be poured out on this Christ-rejecting world, and God is preparing Israel for the Second Coming of the Messiah.

So we saw in chapter 4 the raptured church, the triumphant church. Now in chapter 5, we will see the redeemed church. The focus now shifts from God the Father, who is worshipped as Creator in chapter 4, to God the Son, who is worshipped as the Redeemer, in chapter 5. Jesus “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

As a footnote, it cannot be overstated that the doctrine of redemption is the main theme of the entire Bible, running from Genesis to Revelation. Someone said, “Cut the Bible anywhere and it is red with redemptive truth.” From the time Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden and brought the curse of sin and death into the world, God has been prophesying and planning to send the promised Messiah as the Redeemer. He will buy back the redeemed to God, and He will actually reverse the curse. Mankind will be redeemed; those who believe and trust in Jesus Christ will be redeemed. And Romans 8 tells us that “The creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.” The creation itself will be restored back to its rightful place. It is all because of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer.

When Adam and Eve sinned, Satan actually became the god of this world or “the god of this age,” 2 Corinthians 4:4. We live in a fallen world in which Satan is “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.”

Now in chapter 5, we finish the prelude, which runs from chapters 4-5, to the tribulation. Before the dark time of the tribulation, when God’s wrath is poured out upon the earth, we see this heavenly picture to comfort and encourage the saints, when it is darkest just before the dawning of a new day. So in chapter 5, the scene is still heaven, and the focus is Jesus the Redeemer.

This chapter has five movements or sections, all surrounding the concept of Christ the

Redeemer.

The first section is in verse 1, where we see the scroll of redemption. “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.” So when John starts this chapter with the word “and,” he is continuing from chapter 4. He said, “I saw.” He saw that God the Father, “who sat on the throne,” had in His “right hand,” which is the hand of authority and power, “a scroll.” It wasn’t a book but “a scroll”; they didn’t have books in those days.

What is the identity of this scroll? The whole chapter involves around this scroll and finding a Redeemer who can take this scroll and open the seals. I believe that this scroll is a reference to the title deed to the earth. It contains God’s judgments. In the book of Revelation, as each seal is opened by Jesus the Redeemer, God’s wrath is poured out. When the seventh seal of the scroll is opened, there is a series of seven trumpet judgments. When the seventh trumpet blows, there is a series of seven bowl judgments of God’s wrath being poured out on planet earth coming out of that seventh trumpet.

So this is the sad reality: John talks about a book that he ate, which at first was sweet to his taste. That was in anticipation of the coming kingdom and the victory of the Redeemer. But then as John digested it, it became bitter in his belly, because he realized what was yet to happen on the earth, that God’s wrath would be poured out.

So the scroll is the title deed to the earth. You ask, “What do you mean by that?” When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, they forfeited their dominion of the earth over to Satan. That’s why he became “the prince of the power of the air,” the god of this age or “aiónios.” So they turned over the authority of the earth to the devil, the god of this world.

Jesus is going to come back, take the scroll and lose the seals. He will redeem fallen earth. The imagery or picture is of a legal document that was used for a piece of property that could be ransomed or redeemed. The document would actually be sealed with seven seals on the outside. On the inside, there would be an inscription about the legal aspects of the document.

In the Hebrew, it’s called the doctrine of the “goel” or “the kinsman redeemer.” The book of Ruth is the story of the goel or the kinsman redeemer. Naomi and her family had property in Bethlehem, they left to go to Moab and when they came back, Boaz fell in love with Ruth. He then was the goel or kinsman redeemer or near of kin. So Boaz bought the land or redeemer the land, and he took Ruth as his bride. He didn’t want the land; he wanted Ruth. It is a beautiful love story. Boaz married Ruth, and from their lineage came Jesse, then David and ultimately the Messiah. It is a picture of the redemption.

There were three things that could be redeemed. One was a slave, the second thing was a wife and the third one was land. So if you fell on hard times and were poor, you could sell yourself into slavery in order to get money. But you could be a slave only for so long, because your near kin, goel or family member could pay a price and buy you out of slavery and set you free. We

were slaves to sin, so Jesus came and bought us with His blood and set us free.

What about the wife? If a woman was married and had no children and her husband died, then the Bible says that his near kin, his near brother would marry her and raise up children to his dead brother in his name. He would be the goel; he would redeem the woman.

And if you lost land by war, famine or hard times, you only lost it for a certain number of years. Then to keep the land in the family name, a near relative could buy that land back or redeem it.

These are all pictures of God sending His Son, Jesus Christ, who became a man—one of the qualifications of the goel, a near kinsman—so that he could buy the land—He had the purchase price, which was His death. He takes the land and takes out the bride, the church, for Himself.

So there is a lot of imagery, symbolism and fulfillment here with the idea of the scroll being the title deed to the earth and Jesus being our goel, our kinsman redeemer.

The first two things in this picture have been redeemed. We were slaves, we're the church, and we have been "caught up...to meet the Lord in the air." That only leaves in the book of Revelation for the earth to be restored, and we'll see that later in this chapter.

The second movement or section, in verses 2-3, is the search for the redeemer. John said, "Then I saw..."—in verse 1, he also said, "I saw"—"...a strong angel..."—or "aggelos"—"...proclaiming with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?'" So the question is, who is worthy to take from the right hand of God the Father the title deed to the earth and loose the seven seals of it?

Verse 3, "And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it." Philippians 2:10 also gives us these same three categories from which "every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." So John said that no one in heaven, on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll and to look on it.

Notice in verse 3 this statement: "No one...was able." So no man or angel was able to redeem or take the scroll and loose the seals. This is a picture of man's attempts to redeem himself and failed. No one can redeem himself; man cannot redeem himself. Man has tried religion, politics, philosophy, psychology, science and human government. I don't think, after all these years, that we think that the government can save us.

I'm proud to be an American and I'm going to vote my Christian conscience. At the top of my list is the sanctity of life and the sanctity of marriage. Every life matters, and those in the womb especially. But government isn't going to save us; government is not our great hope. Jesus Christ is our great hope. Jesus Christ is the only one worthy to save us.

This section of Revelation makes it very clear that there is only one redeemer, and His name is

Jesus. He's the one who came to save us, because man has fallen into sin. Ephesians 2:1 says that we "were dead in trespasses and sins." So we cannot save ourselves.

So we see the scroll, we see the search, but no one was found to take the scroll and to look at it.

Then, thirdly, in verse 4, we see the next movement, the sobbing of no redeemer. John said, "So I wept much..."—literally in the Greek it's "I sobbed convulsively"—"...because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll or to look at it." So John is weeping in heaven. Tears in heaven? Could this be why the Bible says that "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes"?

John was sobbing in heaven when he looked at the world around him, because his thought was that the world would have to go on under the dominion of Satan. Death and sin will reign, if there is no one found worthy to take the scroll and loose its seals. So this picture of John weeping is an actual picture of all the tears of all God's people throughout all history.

I like what the great Baptist preacher, W.A. Criswell said. He said,

"John's tears represent the tears of all of God's people throughout all the centuries. They're the tears of Adam and Eve as they view the still form of their dead son, Abel, and they sense the awful consequence of their disobedience. These are the tears of all the children of Israel in bondage as they cried to God for deliverance from affliction and for salvation. They are the sobs and the tears wrung from the heart of the soul of God's people as they stand beside the graves of their loved ones and experience the indescribable heartache and disappointment of life. Such is the curse that is laid upon God's beautiful creation. No wonder John wept so fervently. If no redeemer could be found to remove the curse, it meant that God's creation was forever consigned to remain in the hands of Satan."

Is it any wonder why John sobbed convulsively? Can you imagine how that must have hit John as he looked and he thought, No! The world must go on under the influence of Satan and sin, and there is no redeemer. Someone suggested that the only way to understand and enter into the book of Revelation is to sob with John as we look at this world under the heel of Satan and the curse.

The fourth glorious movement or section, in verses 5-7, is the Savior, our Redeemer. So there is the scroll, the search, the sobbing and now the Savior, our Redeemer. "But one of the elders..."—one of those 24 elders representing the church—"...said to me, 'Do not weep.'" It's very strong language in the Greek: "Stop sobbing!" "Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.' And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Then He came..."—that is, "the Lamb, the Lion, the Root of David"—"...and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne."

As John is sobbing and weeping, one of the elders instructs him; it's actually a command or

imperative. He said, "Stop sobbing! Stop weeping!" John was told not to sob, and the reason was that there was One who was worthy who was found. No man, no politician, no military leader, no philosopher, no scientist, no angel in heaven was found worthy to redeem fallen man.

But one was found worthy. This redeemer who is worthy is none other than Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. There is only one who was found worthy. In John 14:6, Jesus answers Thomas' question of "How can we know the way," to heaven? Then "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.'" And just so Thomas wouldn't miss what He said, Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father except through Me." So there is only one person who can get us to heaven, to the Father's house. He is "the way." There is only one person who can reveal the truth about God; it's Jesus Christ. There is only one person who can bring us the life of God in our soul; that's Jesus Christ. He's "the way, the truth, and the life." It is so consistent to what is happening in these verses; there was one who was worthy.

Notice how Jesus is described in our text. First, He is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," verse 5. This goes back to Genesis 49:9-10, where the lion is pictured as the tribe of Judah, and "The scepter shall not depart from Judah." He will be the King. It's a Messianic prophesy of Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Again, in verse 5, He is also called "the Root of David." This takes us back to Isaiah 11:1. When Jesus was on the earth, how many times was He referred to as "Thou Son of David"? If you've read the genealogies in Matthew's and Luke's Gospels, you know that it traces back to David and Abraham. Jesus has the promised lineage for the goel, the kinsman redeemer and the Messiah.

So Jesus is first of all the Lion; secondly, the Root of David, which is a Messianic title; and thirdly, verse 6, He is the "Lamb as though it had been slain." How can Jesus be both the Lion and the Lamb? Simple. In His first coming, He came as the Lamb. Remember I said that redemption is the thread that runs through the whole Bible? In the Old Testament, every lamb that was slain was a picture of Jesus Christ. At the Passover, when they slit the throat of the lamb, it bled, and they put the blood on the doorposts. That's a picture of Jesus Christ. So Jesus came the first time in humility, in lowliness and He willingly, voluntarily gave His life on the Cross as our sacrificial Lamb.

But when Jesus comes back the second time—we call it the Second Coming of Christ or the second Advent of Christ—He's coming back not as the Lamb but as the Lion. He's coming back in power and majesty and glory.

When He came the first time, He came incognito, as a humble man, born as a babe. He grew up like any other person, subject to His own parents. He learned obedience. He laid aside the splendor and glory and majesty of heaven. Paul says in Philippians 2:7-9 that He took on Himself "the form of a bondservant... and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him." We see that in our text.

So Jesus will come as the King in His second Advent, but He came the first time as a Lamb to suffer and die upon the Cross for our sins.

Now notice some things about the Lamb in verse 6. He's the Lamb that is standing, which means that He is alive; He is risen. Standing also speaks of the fact that He has work to do. When you're finished with your work, you sit down. What is the work that Jesus has to do? His wrath to be poured out on planet earth. When we get to chapter 6, we'll actually see people saying to the rocks and hills, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!" So here we see the Lamb's wrath, the day of the Lamb. So Jesus Christ is as a Lamb, and He is standing, which means He's still alive.

But He is also "the Lamb who was slain." So how is He slain yet standing? The answer is the Resurrection. So they symbolize the death—the slaying, the Crucifixion—and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Rarely do we see Jesus standing in heaven. He is "seated at the right hand of the Father." That speaks of His finished work. But we also see Him when He stands to receive Stephen, the martyred servant coming to heaven. That's when we see Jesus standing, ready to receive Stephen.

But in our text, when we see Him as a Lamb standing, that means that He is still alive.

Just a footnote before we move on. This is one of the Scriptures that indicates that Jesus still bears the scars of His Crucifixion in heaven. If that's the case—and I believe it is—forever and ever we will be reminded of the price He paid for our redemption. How amazing that is going to be to look upon "the Lamb who was slain." After His Resurrection, we know that He still bore the scars. Then why wouldn't He still bear them now? He told Thomas, "Reach your hand here, and put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." His hands still bore the scars. So He was "the Lamb who was slain," the Lamb who was standing.

Next, in verse 6, He is the Lamb who is sovereign. He has "seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God." The seven horns speak of His power and authority. He is omnipotent. The seven eyes speak of His omniscience; He sees and knows all things. "The seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth" speaks of His omnipresence; He is everywhere present. This Lion, who is also a Lamb, is also the sovereign of the entire universe. He is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. He is God.

Notice how this section closes in verse 7. "Then He..."—that is, Jesus, the Lion and the Lamb—"...came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him..."—God the Father—"...who sat on the throne." You can bet that God the Father would not relinquish this title deed to anyone but God the Son, the worthy One.

There were some qualifications that had to be met in order to become a goel, a kinsman redeemer. Number one, you had to be a blood relative. Jesus met this qualification because of the Incarnation; He became a man. Number two, you had to pay the price. Jesus lived a

sinless life. When He died on the Cross, He was the only one qualified. One of the many reasons that man cannot save himself is because man is a sinner. You can't die for your own sins because you're a sinner. It takes a sinless one. Jesus gave His life and paid the price. Number three, you had to be willing to pay the price. Jesus voluntarily went to the Cross. Number four, you had to marry the wife. The wife represents the church; we're the bride of Christ. He was willing to pay the price to take the bride out of the field that He redeemed with that price. Jesus Christ is the Redeemer. John 14:6 says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

There is one last section or movement, and it is the longest. It runs from verses 8-14. It is the songs to the Redeemer. There are three groups either singing or saying three different songs. You'll want to become familiar with these verses, so when you get to heaven, you'll know the order of service. We fall down, cast our crowns and worship the Lamb.

Group number one is in verses 8-10. They are the redeemed church. "Now when He..."—that is, "Jesus"—"...had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders..."—which I believe is the church—"...fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." So it's the church and maybe the Old Testament and New Testament saints. They fell down and began to worship the Lamb. "And they sang a new song..." Whenever you have a reference to "a new song" or "sing a new song" that is repeated throughout the Bible, it's usually tied in with a salvation song. They sang, "...saying: 'You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals...'—here's the reason—"...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."

The scene in heaven closes with three groups praising the Lord. I want you to note that there are four reasons, in verses 9-10, why the church praises Jesus in heaven. Reason number one is that He was slain for us. "You were slain." Reason number two is that He redeemed us. "And have redeemed us to God by Your blood..."—we talked about that blood line throughout the Bible—"...out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation." This is a reference to the church that is bought by the blood from "every tribe and tongue and people and nation." Reason number three is He made us a kingdom of priests. "And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we..."—that is, "the church"—"...shall reign on the earth." Reason number four is, "We shall reign on the earth." That is prophetic; it looks forward.

I like what one commentator said: "This is a worship song—they said, 'You are worthy'; this is a Gospel song—'For You were slain, and have redeemed us...by Your blood'; this is a missionary song—'have redeemed us...out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation'; and this is a prophetic song—'have made us kings and priests,' and when He comes back in the future in His Second Coming, 'we shall reign on the earth.'" That's the millennial reign of Christ, which is for 1,000 years and will flow into the eternal state.

These verses are hard for exposition, because they are so glorious and grand. Before chapter

6, when God's wrath is poured out on the earth, there is praise that breaks forth in heaven.

The second group of worshippers is in verses 11-12. They are the angels. "Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them..."—that is, "the angels," I believe—"...was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands..." In Biblical language, that means "a lot" or "more than you can count." It's like trying to count the stars; we can't count the angels. We have no idea how many angels there are. It's going to be amazing when we hear these angels in heaven.

I hate to say this, but it's true: they say that the angels don't sing. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that angels sing. You know me; I'm all about the Bible, but I want angels to sing! Why can't the angels sing? How do you have the babe born in Bethlehem and "Hark, the herald angels sing," if the angels don't sing?! That would mess up my Christmas song. It's a technicality that I think scholars make too big a deal of. So when we get to heaven, if the angels are singing, they were wrong and I was right. I think they'll sing.

But in the Bible, it uses the words "sang" and "saying." That's a distinction that I think is an important point. Nevertheless, what they do is they "sang a new song, saying with a loud voice: 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain...'—so they talk about His Crucifixion—"...to receive..."—and He receives this seven-fold blessing—"...power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!" Seven is the number of completion. So the angels know how to worship God.

This is all exploding in heaven because of one thing: Jesus went up and took the scroll out of the right hand of God the Father. And all heaven breaks forth in worship. So in verse 8, we have "the twenty-four elders," in verse 11, we have "many angels" and the third group of worshippers is in verses 13-14, all creation and every creature. "And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth..."—the same three divisions of Philippians 2:10—"...and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I..."—John—"...heard saying: 'Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!' Then the four living creatures said, 'Amen!'" Someone said, "They're the Pentecostals in heaven." Another person said, "They're the Baptists in heaven." We'll find out when we get there. "And the twenty-four elders..."—this is us, the church—"...fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever." Amen.

How about what John Newton said in his song Amazing Grace?

"When we've been there ten-thousand years,

Bright shining as the sun,

We've no less days to sing God's praise

Then when we first begun."

That's our future. That's our hope.

Is it any wonder that the psalmist ended the book of Psalms with "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord."

So we should praise the Lord because He chose us, He redeemed us, He "sealed us for the day of His redemption" with His Spirit. Amen.