

You Are Worthy To Take the Scroll

5: 6-14

DIG: Where does slain lamb appear? What is the significance of this? What is the response when He takes the scroll? Analyze the three songs. How is the Lamb described? Who comprises the first musical group? The second? The third? Who are the true kings and priests on earth? What elements of praise do you sense here? How do we know that Jesus was more than just a good man, or a prophet?

REFLECT: What would the visions in Chapters 4 and 5 have meant to the persecuted believers of ancient Asia? What does this vision say to us today as we see an out of control world? Knowing our future as kings and priests, how should we invest our time, finances, and talents in the coming Kingdom?

Throughout human history many have tried to rule the world through military conquest. The first and most powerful was **Lucifer**, that **old dragon who is the devil (20:2)**. After his rebellion against **ADONAI** was crushed, **he** and his angelic followers were thrown out of heaven (**Luke 10:18, Revelation 12:3-4**), and **he** became the **god of this world (Second Corinthians 4:4)**. **He** inspired others to try their hand at conquest, men like Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, Alexander the Great, the emperors of Rome, Attila the Hun, Genghis Khan, Napoleon, Lenin, Stalin, and of course, Adolph Hitler. But in the future, there will come the most powerful **Satan**-possessed human conqueror of all, the antichrist. But he will fail as all those other men have failed to rule the world through military conquest. Only one has the right, the **power** and the authority to rule the earth: **the Lord Jesus Christ**. One day **He** will take back what is rightfully **His** from **the devil**, the usurper, and all the rebels, demonic and human. No one else is capable of ruling the world.¹⁶⁷

When **John** looked, instead of the anticipated mighty **Lion**, **he** saw a **Lamb** as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, ready to act as the righteous **Judge**, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The **Lamb**, *arnion*, refers to a little lamb, or a pet lamb. It pictures the Passover lamb, when Jewish families were required to keep the sacrificial **lamb** as a household pet four days before sacrificing it (**Exodus 12:3-6**). While every **lamb** sacrificed in the Hebrew Scriptures pictures **Yeshua**, **He** is only referred to as a **Lamb** once (**Isaiah 53:7-8**). When we come to most of the New Covenant, **He** is only identified as a **Lamb** four times (**John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32** and **First Peter 1:19**). In the book of **Revelation**, however, **He** appears as the **Lamb** twenty-eight times.

The Lamb, like the Lion, is obviously symbolic, but the symbolism is clear. Jesus Christ is a Lion and a Lamb. The Lion symbolizes His Second Coming and the Lamb symbolizes His First Coming. The Lion is symbolic of His majesty and the Lamb is symbolic of His meekness. As a Lion He is a Sovereign and as a Lamb He is a Savior. As a Lion He is a Judge, while as a Lamb He was judged. The Lion represents the government of God and the Lamb represents the grace of God.¹⁶⁸

When **John** first saw the glorified **Son of man (1:13-16)**, the symbol of a **Lion** would have been appropriate. However, now **Yeshua** is seen in another light. The conquering **King** had to first become a suffering **Servant**. It was when **He** functioned as **the Lamb of God** that **He** bought us back as if paying **a ransom (Mark 10:45)**, the price of redemption having been satisfied. Thus, it is as **the Lamb** that **He** must receive the title deed to the **earth** from **God the Father** who had kept it in safekeeping throughout the Dispensation of Grace (see my commentary on **Hebrews - The Dispensation of Grace**).

*In a very real sense, **Jesus is the kinsman-redeemer (Ruth 3:9b) of Adam. He will act as the Redeemer who comes to take back the earth that is rightfully His, and to claim His bride (19:7, 21:2 and 9, 22:17). And like the Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25), all debts will be paid in full (John 19:30), and the slaves (of sin) will go free.***

Several features indicate that this was no ordinary **lamb**. First, **He** was **standing**. **He** is no longer seated at the right hand of **ADONAI**. **He** is moving now and **He** is coming to the earth. The judgment of the Great Tribulation is about to strike.¹⁶⁸ The scars from **His** deadly wounds were clearly visible. However, **He** was alive. The phrase **as if it had been slain** is an idiom referring to someone who is resurrected.¹⁶⁹ Secondly, **the Lamb had seven horns, which represent strength and power (First Samuel 2:1 and 10; Second Samuel 22:3; Psalms 18:2, 75:10, 89:17 and 24; Jeremiah 48:25 and Micah 4:13), and seven eyes which are pictured as the seven spirits of God (Isaiah 11:2), sent out into all the earth (5:6).**

The dramatic moment for which **John** and the great assembly had been waiting for finally arrived. **The Lamb came** (aorist tense meaning completed action) **and took** (perfect tense) **the scroll from the right hand of Him who sat on the throne (5:7)**. This is **Messiah's** normal position in the present age (**Psalm 110:1; Matthew 22:44; Acts 2:34-35, 7:56**). The use of the Greek perfect tense emphasizes the lasting benefits of **His** sacrificial death and resurrection. **He** was indeed the world's **Redeemer**. **Dani'el** saw the same scene described here (**Dani'el 7:13-14**), although **he** only saw a vision and did not mention **the scroll**. **John**, however, mentions **the scroll** because **he** was there and saw the actual events.

As the **Lamb** takes the **scroll**, praise breaks out all over the universe. To the two doxologies of **chapter 4** are added three more in **chapter 5**. The spontaneous outburst of worship results from the realization that the long-anticipated defeat of sin, death and **Satan** is about to be accomplished and the **Lord** will return to the **earth** in triumph and establish **His** glorious messianic Kingdom. The curse will be reversed, the believing remnant of Isra'el will be saved, and the Church, made up of Jewish and Gentile believers, will be honored, exalted and granted the privilege of reigning with **Messiah**. All of the pent-up anticipation of the ages finally bursts out at the prospect of what is about to take place.¹⁷⁰

And when He had taken it the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. This is the common reaction of those before **ADONAI** on His throne. Each of the twenty-four elders had a harp, which denotes praise. Only the harp and the trumpet are mentioned as musical instruments in the book of **Revelation**. And they will be holding golden bowls full of incense, which is interpreted as the prayers of God's people (5:8). David said: May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice (Ps 141:2). In the Tabernacle, the evening offering came before the incense was burned (see my commentary on **Exodus Fp - The Altar of Incense in the Sanctuary: Christ, Our Advocate with the Father**). The prayers of the righteous are a sweet smelling aroma to **YHVH** only if the sacrifice had preceded it. In other words, the sacrifice had to come first, before the incense could be burned. And that is the picture we see here in heaven. They are holding golden bowls full of incense because the sacrifice had already been made. The Lamb had already been slain (5:6).

Since **Yeshua** is the only One worthy to break open the seals, this section concludes with a description of the worship of the Lamb. And in the third doxology of chapters 4 and 5, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders sang a new, or fresh, song. They had heard this song before, but then they will hear it in a new fresh way. This is an echo of the worship in the TaNaKh, where Isra'el is frequently urged to sing a new song to **ADONAI** (Psalm 33:3, 40:3, 98:1, 144:9, 149:1, Isaiah 42:10). The truth that the twenty-four elders represent all believers and are in heaven during the Great Tribulation, gives much credibility to the conviction that the Church will not go through the hour of trial (3:10). This powerful worship in the throne room of **ADONAI** gives us a rare insight into the spontaneity and variety of genuine worship.

Chapter 5 verses 9b-13 are like 1:12-16 because they repeat elements of Dani'el's vision in 7:9-14. They sing: You are worthy (*axios*) to take the scroll and to open its seal, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased people for God. The Greek word slain is also used of the death of Christ in 5:6, 9, 12 and 13:8, but it is an echo of Isaiah 53:7, where the same root is found: He was led like a lamb to the

slaughter. The word is also used of the martyrdom of believers in Asia (**6:9** and **18:24**).¹⁷¹ His worthiness is a result of His great act of redemption. He is **worthy** precisely because He was **slain**. His sacrificial death was the means by which He purchased men and women by God for Himself.¹⁷² It is reassuring to know that **the Lamb of God** qualifies to carry out the plan of God. Like Joseph, Jesus was given a Gentile bride (**Genesis 41:44-52**) from every tribe and language and people and nation (**5:9** and its variations at **7:9, 10:11, 11:9, 13:7, 14:6** and **17:15**). So much for the racists of every flavor!

All these cry out: **You have made us, to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and we (KJV) will reign** (future tense) with Him on the earth during the millennial Kingdom (**5:10**, also **1:6**). What was promised to the Israelites at Mount Sinai: **You will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 61:6)**, was fulfilled when the Church was established. Together believers are a **kingdom** - individually we already are **priests**. **The elders** are on thrones and crowned as victors because **they** represent the New Covenant. But **angels** soon join the **four living creatures** and the **elders** in praising the **Lamb**.¹⁷³

Then in the fourth doxology, all the other **angels** were added to the heavenly choir. **John looked again, and he heard the singing of . . . angels around the throne (5:11 NLT)**. In his book *Ninety Minuets in Heaven, A True Story of Death and Life*, Pastor Don Piper describes his experience after being pronounced legally dead after a horrific traffic accident. Although not a biblical account, it is, at the very least, still very interesting. He writes: As a young boy I spent a lot of time in the country and woods. When walking through waist-high dried grass, I often surprised a covey of birds and flushed them out of their nests on the ground. A whooshing sound accompanied their wings as they fled away.

He goes on to say: My most vivid memory of heaven is what I *heard*. I can only describe it as a holy swoosh of wings. But I'd have to magnify that thousands of times to explain the effect of the sound **in heaven**.

It was the most beautiful and pleasant sound I've ever heard, and it didn't stop. It was like a song that goes on forever. I felt awestruck, wanting only to listen. I didn't just hear music. It seemed as if I were part of the music - and it played in and through my body. I stood still, and yet I felt embraced by the sounds. As aware as I became of the joyous sounds and melodies that filled the air, I wasn't distracted. I felt as if the heavenly concert filled every part of my being, and at the same time I focused on everything else around me.

I never saw anything that produced the sound. I had the sense that whatever made the heavenly music was just above me, but I didn't look up. I'm not sure why. Perhaps it was because I was so enamored with the people around me, or maybe it was because my senses were so engaged that I feasted on everything at the same time. I asked no questions and never wondered about anything. Everything was so perfect. I sensed that I knew everything and had no questions to ask.

Myriads of sounds so filled my mind and heart that it's difficult to explain them. The most amazing one, however, was the **angel's** wings. I didn't see them, but the sound was a beautiful, holy melody with a cadence that seemed never to stop. The swishing sound resounded as if was a form of never-ending praise. As I listened I simply *knew* what it was.

A second sound remains, even today, the single, most vivid memory I have of my entire heavenly experience. I call it music, but it differed from anything I have ever heard or ever expect to hear on the earth. The melodies of praise filled the atmosphere. The nonstop intensity and endless variety overwhelmed me.

The praise was unending, but the most remarkable thing to me was the hundreds of songs were being sung at the same time - all of them worshipping **ADONAI**. As I approached the large, magnificent gate, I heard them from every direction and realized that each voice praised **God**. I write *voice*, but it was more than that. Some sounded instrumental, but I wasn't sure - and I wasn't concerned. Praise was everywhere, and all of it was musical, yet comprised of melodies and tones I'd never experienced before.

"Hallelujah!" "Praise!" "Glory to **God**!" "Praise to **the King**!" Such words rang out in the midst of all the music. I don't know if angels were singing them or if they came from humans. I felt awestruck and caught up in the heavenly mood that I didn't look around. My heart filled with the deepest joy I've ever experienced. I wasn't a participant in the worship, yet I felt as if my heart rang out with the same kind of joy and exuberance.

If we played three CDs of praise at the same time, we'd have a cacophony of noise that would drive us crazy. This was totally different. Every sound blended, and each voice or instrument enhanced the others.

As strange as it may seem, I could distinguish each song. It sounded as if each hymn of praise was meant for me to hear as I moved inside the gates.

Many of the old hymns and choruses I had sung at various times in my life were part of the music - along with hundreds of songs I had never heard before. Hymns of praise, modern-sounding choruses, and ancient chants filled my ears and brought not only a deep peace but the greatest feeling of joy I've ever experienced.

As I stood before the gate, I didn't think of it, but later I realized that I didn't hear such songs as "The Old Rugged Cross" or "The Nail-Scarred Hand." None of the hymns that filled the air were about **Jesus'** sacrifice or death. I heard no sad songs and instinctively knew that there are no sad songs **in heaven**. Why would there be? All were praises about **Christ's** reign as **King of Kings** and our joyful worship for all **He** has done for us and how wonderful **He** is.

The celestial tunes surpassed any I have ever heard. I couldn't calculate the number of songs - perhaps thousands - offered up simultaneously, and yet there was no chaos, because I had the capacity to hear each one and discern the lyrics and melody.

I marveled at the glorious music. Though not possessed of a great singing voice in life, I knew that if I sang, my voice would be in perfect pitch and would sound as melodious and harmonious as the thousands of other voices and instruments that filled my ears.

As I've pondered the meaning of the memory of the music, it seems curious. I would have expected the most memorable experience to be something I had seen or the physical embrace of a loved one. Yet above everything else, I cherish those sounds and at times I think, *I can't wait to hear them again - in person*. It's what I look forward to. I want to see everybody, but I know I'll be with them forever. I want to experience everything heaven offers, but most of all, I want to *hear* those never-ending songs again.

Obviously, I can't really know how **God** feels, but I find joy and comfort in thinking that **He** must be pleased and blessed by the continuous sounds of praise.¹⁷⁴

In ever widening concentric circles with **the Lamb** in the center surrounded by **the four living creatures**, **the twenty-four elders**, John saw **many angels numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousands times ten thousand (5:11)**. Literally, **they** were held to be so numerous that **John** could not count **them (Daniel 7:10)**. In a day when humanistic men are unwilling to acknowledge **Yeshua Messiah** as more than a good man or a model example, we should hear what **the angels** of heaven, who know **Him** best, think of **Him**.¹⁷⁵ **In 5:12 they** sang heartily: **Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain (5:6, 9 and 12), to receive praise for His power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honor, glory and blessing**. There are

seven attributes here, and **seven** is the biblical number of perfection (see **Ag - The Importance of the Number Seven in the book of Revelation**). **Jesus Christ** already possesses everything that mankind desires. If we have any of these seven attributes, it comes from **Him**. We need to acknowledge that before the world because **He** is **Lord** of all.

Finally, in the fifth doxology, in **Chapters 4 and 5**, **every creature** in all creation joins in a mighty climax of praise to **God**. **Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them**, singing: **To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb**. As followers of **Messiah**, whether we are in small groups, choirs, churches or messianic synagogues, bringing praise to **the Lord** is one of the key elements in our own expression of faith. And one day, we'll be singing in a concert that defies imagination. In honor of **Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb**, the **song** begins at **the throne** of **God**, is joined by multiplied thousands of **angels**, and finally includes **every creature in heaven, earth and sea**. Together we'll sing: **Praise and honor and glory and power be to ADONAI the Father and Seh Ha'Elohim, God's Lamb, the Lamb for ever and ever (5:13)**.

*The lambs used for offerings in the Tabernacle and the Temple were without spot or blemish. They provided atonement for the sins of the people. Thank You, **God**, for sending **Jesus the Lamb**, who took our sins on **Himself** so we could be forgiven.*

The four living creatures were the first to offer praise around **the throne**, so it is fitting that **they** should also bring it to a close.¹⁷⁶ **They** signaled that **they** agreed with the praise by saying: **Amen, and the elders fell down and also worshiped the Lord (5:14)**.

When we come to **ADONAI** in prayer, no matter how feeble we feel our faith is, we join that heavenly chorus. **God's** greatness, **Yeshua's** worthiness in itself, call forth from all creation proclamations of praise. We can praise **Him** for **His** purity, **His** humility, for **His** glory, for **power**, for **His** victory, or for **His** love. Any one of **His** attributes is enough inspiration for the heavenly chorus! So ask **ELOHIM** to open your eyes to the heavenly environment of worship, an environment that you can tap into every day. Let your voice enter into these songs of praise. Don't think that your prayer is weak or useless. Turn to **the Lord** in worship. Your heart will soar and your needs will be met. **Yeshua** is faithful!

*Almighty **God**, seated on the throne, you are worthy of all praise! Lamb of God who was slain, you deserve all glory and honor! May everything that has breath join in praising You forever and ever.¹⁷⁷*

Thus, **chapters four and five** provide us with the heavenly side of the picture, **John** now turns to the earth in **chapter 6**. The same **four living creatures** will bring forth the **four** horsemen of the Apocalypse. The same **Lord** and **Redeemer** who is the object of worship and **praise** on the part of the saints in **heaven** is also **the righteous Judge** of the wicked on the earth. In light of these future events, how important is the decision that faces every human soul? Today is **the day of salvation**, as the Scriptures make plain (**2 Corinthians 6:1-3**). Those who hear and respond to the divine invitation have the promise of **blessing** throughout eternity and deliverance from the time of judgment which will fall upon those who neglect to enter into the safety of **salvation** in their **day** of opportunity.¹⁷⁸ Are you saved today? If you are interested in learning how to join in this heavenly choir see my commentary on **Isaiah Jd - Yet It Was the LORD's Will to Crush Him, and Cause Him to Suffer**.