

The Lamb Is Worthy

She sounds wonderful!" LaRonda said to her sister, Renatta. "She has really been practicing her violin."

The two were talking about Renatta's 15-year-old daughter, Jazmin, who was practicing upstairs.

"A Worship Extravaganza? Is that what it's called?" LaRonda asked. "How long will it last?"

"It should be about an hour," Renatta said. "I'm excited to be going to a service of music and worship. It's refreshing and rejuvenating."

"Well, you do have a good choir. And I always love to hear my niece," LaRonda said.

"I'm glad for you to come," said Renatta. "This is not about entertainment. They may have rehearsed, but this is about leading the people of God into worship. There is so much to thank Him for! Jesus is worthy of our praise."

When LaRonda drove to the church, she passed a billboard along the way that said "In God We Trust." Only, it didn't say "God." It substituted the name of a politician who was campaigning for office. Something about the Worship Extravaganza made her uneasy about that. As LaRonda joined her sister in the pew, she thought to herself, "Is anyone but Christ worthy of my trust?"

"You sounded good up there," she later told to her niece as she closed the car door.

"Thanks, auntie," said Jazmin.

"What was the song you were playing?" asked LaRonda.

"Great is Thy Faithfulness," answered Jazmin.

- 1. What kinds of people ask for our trust?**
- 2. How is worshipping Jesus different than placing hope in someone else? How can Jesus prove faithful when others do not?**

- 3. What is God's answer to a world in need of hope?**

LESSON FOCUS: Worship the worthy one, the slain and risen Jesus.

Who Is Worthy?

Revelation 5:1–5 KJV

1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? 3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. 4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. 5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

Revelation 5:1–5 NIV

¹Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. ²And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" ³But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. ⁴I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. ⁵Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

John's attention is drawn to the scroll in the right hand of God, who sits on heaven's throne. In the story of the exodus, when God delivered the Israelites from bondage in Egypt, God's right hand is associated with His power to deliver and defeat His enemies (Ex. 15:6). The contents of the scroll are mysterious, but it has to do with God's plan to deliver creation from the powers of darkness. But it is sealed shut with seven seals.

"Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" asks a powerful angel (v. 2). In the previous chapter, God is declared worthy "to receive glory and honor and power" because He created all things (Rev. 4:11). Who

then is worthy to take the scroll from the hand of the creator, God, and to open it? Who could possibly be qualified for such a task? The question is proclaimed so loudly that it rings throughout heaven, earth, and under the earth—all of creation. The renewal of all things hangs in the balance, and God's plan requires a chosen agent. But tragically, no one is worthy for this job (v. 3). No one can open the scroll.

At this point, John weeps and makes a display of great mourning, because he grasps the gravity of the situation (v. 4). God's plan for creation depends on someone worthy to open the scroll and look inside. If there is no one, what does that mean for humanity? God's plan requires a servant who is worthy to rule and judge with complete impartiality. God's plan requires someone to perfectly reflect God's will.

One of the elders surrounding the throne breaks the tension. He tells John to stop weeping because "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed" (v. 5). These titles belong to the Messiah and remind us of Israel's hope for a deliverer who would sit on the throne of David and usher in God's eternal kingdom (see Gen 49:9–10; Isa. 11:1; 2 Sam. 7:12–16). The lion has triumphed, and the victory has already been assured. Jesus, God's Messiah, is able to break the seven seals and reveal God's plan.

4. *The contents of the scroll remain a mystery, but what do we know about it?*

5. *Why does John weep in verse 4?*

6. *What does verse 5 tell us about the one who is worthy?*

The Slain Lamb

Revelation 5:6–10 KJV

6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a

Revelation 5:6–10 NIV

⁶ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four

Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

⁷ And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

⁸ And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. ⁹ And they sung a new song, saying,

Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

¹⁰ And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

living creatures and the elders.

The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. ⁸ And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying:

"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.

¹⁰ You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

John might have expected to see a lion arrive on the scene. But instead, he sees "a lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne" (v. 6). The "Lion" is also the "Lamb," one who has been killed. Yet the elder has just told John that the Messiah has triumphed. God's conquering power has come, not by force, but through sacrifice. Jesus defeated death by dying and rising again. He has given of Himself in love, for the good of others.

The lamb stands at the center of the throne. This suggests something important about the identity of the lamb, for who besides God can share God's throne? The lamb has seven horns and seven eyes. A horn is an image of power in the Old Testament (Deut. 33:17; Ps. 132:17). And John comes right out and tells us that the eyes are the "seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth" (v. 6). Therefore, the eyes may represent God's all-seeing, all-knowing, and ever-present nature. In Zechariah 4:10, the seven eyes belong to Yahweh, and here they are attributed to the lamb. This again suggests something important about the identity of this person: He possesses the complete power and knowledge of Yahweh, and He rules as king from the throne of heaven.

In verse 7, the lamb takes the scroll from the right hand of God. In verses 8–9, those surrounding the throne respond by falling down to worship the lamb, offering prayers of God's people and singing a "new song."

The worshipers sing of Jesus' worthiness to take the scroll, for He was slain. He triumphed through self-giving love, bringing salvation and victory for all God's people. With His own blood, Jesus purchased people from "every tribe and language and people and nation" (v. 9). As in the exodus event, when God set people free from bondage in Egypt, Jesus now brings an even greater deliverance: He extends salvation to the ends of the earth and for all people (Isa. 49:6). In doing so, He has inaugurated a new kingdom, established free people as "a kingdom and priests" to serve God and reign on the earth (Rev. 5:10). This reenacts and extends the calling that God gave Israel, after delivering His people from Egypt (Ex. 19:6). Life in God's kingdom is now marked by praise, prayer, and Christlike love.

7. *What do these verses tell us about the lamb's identity?*

8. *The lamb appears to have been killed (v. 6). How then did He triumph?*

9. *What is the result of Jesus' triumph (vv. 9–10)?*

If Jesus is King

I wonder if she knows I'm a fraud. I remember thinking those words during a summer internship at my family church. I had been assigned to help a woman run a children's outreach at a low-income housing development. This woman had a reputation. She seemed strange to people—strange to me—and her strangeness had to do with her willingness to run headlong into risky places.

I didn't know her well. I knew she was sometimes gone for months or years at a time, following Jesus to some corner of a city or to a town damaged by a big storm. She would come back with stories that challenged the complacency of our church, and it made me uncomfortable.

By this time, I had been a Christian for many years. I knew the story. I confessed Jesus as Lord and believed He rose from the dead. But when I was around her, I couldn't shake the feeling she understood something, and I didn't. She was gripped by the truth. Jesus was her king and she was willing to follow Him wherever He went. I paid lip service to that idea, but I'm not sure I was willing to let the rubber meet the road.

As I watched her jump into action, it finally dawned on me: If Jesus is who Scripture says He is, that changes everything. If He is the rightful king over all creation and has made a way for all people to be part of His kingdom, then I owe Him my unchecked allegiance. Certainly I can endure a little awkwardness for my Savior. It's time for the rubber to meet the road.

10. *Can you think of someone else who has modeled sacrificial love for the good of others? Who?*

11. *If Jesus is king, and His kingdom has begun, what are the implications for us?*

12. *What obstacles keep people from giving full allegiance to Jesus?*

Living for the Kingdom

Jesus, the lamb who was slain and has risen, is worthy of worship. Through His sacrificial death, He defeated the powers of darkness and made a way for all people to be a part of His kingdom to follow Him as king.

► *Set aside time this week to pray that you might acknowledge Jesus as king and live for His kingdom. Ask God to show you what a life of worship will mean for you.*

KEY VERSE

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. —Revelation 5:9 KJV

And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. —Revelation 5:9 NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of April 28 through May 4

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

Mon. Psalm 86:1–17—Answer Me, O Lord.

Tues. 1 Peter 5:1–11—Be Alert.

Wed. Lamentations 3:19–36—The Lord Will Not Reject Forever.

Thurs. 2 Peter 3:1–10—God Patiently Waits for Repentance.

Fri. 2 Peter 3:11–18—Live the Godly Life.

Sat. 1 Chronicles 21:1–13—A Presumptive King.

Sun. 1 Chronicles 21:14–30—A Costly Sacrifice.

Lamb of God and Lion of Judah

In today's lesson, Jesus is described as a lion and a lamb. Whereas lambs are gentle creatures, lions tend to signify kingly power and might. When you think of Jesus, do you tend to see Him as a lamb or a lion? Why do you think you identify with one more than the other?

Read the following verses, and comment on what you learn about Jesus as a lion and a lamb:

John 1:29

Isaiah 53:7-9

Mark 14:62

How can you praise Jesus for being the lion and the lamb?

JESUS FULFILLS THE MEANING OF Sacrifice

The resurrection of Jesus changes everything. On Easter, Christians celebrate the first day of a new creation, the Sunday morning when a mournful group of followers met a resurrected Savior walking about alive, risen in the flesh. Jesus comes with a simple word of greeting, leaving people to fall at his feet in speechless worship of a risen Lord (Matt. 28:9).

A risen and ascended Jesus is enthroned in heaven. He alone, the lamb who was slain, is undisputedly the chosen one, “worthy” to purchase a kingdom by the sacrifice of His own blood (Rev. 5:9–10). Those in heaven sing of Christ’s redemption “from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev. 5:10). Jesus’ first disciples rethought everything which they thought they knew, and Christians soon find that all Scripture points forward to Jesus (see Luke 24:27).

For instance, King David constructed an altar to offer bulls and wheat offerings. But David was faced with a choice: should he pay for the sacrifice, or accept the free gift of someone else (see 1 Chron. 21:23–24)? Just as David chose to offer a costly sacrifice for sin, Jesus gave the costliest sacrifice of all, laying aside His own life. Thus Jesus fulfills the meaning of costly sacrifice.

Solomon dedicated a temple to the worship of God. There, before all the priests and people of Israel, the temple became filled with God’s glory (2 Chron. 7:1–2). But the glory of God came to earth in a new way, in the person of Jesus (John 1:14). Followers of Jesus can experience God’s presence and worship “in Spirit and in truth” (John 4:23). Thus Jesus fulfills the purpose of temple.

When the people of God returned from exile, they appointed priests to attend the fires and the presence of God (Ezra 3:10–11). All who had been restored to their lands were ready to contribute to the temple’s upkeep and the care of the Levitical priests (see Neh. 10:37–39). But in the new covenant community of God’s people, which includes Jews and Gentiles who have been freed from their slavery to sin (Rom. 6:6–7), collections are also to be taken for the needs among them (see Acts 2:45; 2 Cor. 8:13–15). Thus by caring for financial needs of one another, the Body of Christ fulfills the meaning of tithes and offerings.

Jesus’ resurrection changes everything, but nothing is diminished or discarded. By placing Jesus in the center, the rest of Scripture comes into new focus.



This Jewish coin was minted during the first century. Just as Jews needed to be faithful to support the needs of the temple and priesthood (see Neh. 10:32–33). Christians support the Body of Christ by giving to the needs of one another.

CNG



This section of the Western Wall at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem is considered one of the holiest sites for modern Jews to pray. The foundations of the original Second Temple were laid when Jews returned in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 3:10–13).

Gilabrand



Like the threshing floor where David constructed an altar, this modern threshing floor has a large open space. David purchased the land for a fair price, making this a sincere sacrifice (1 Chron. 21:24).

Stan Zurek



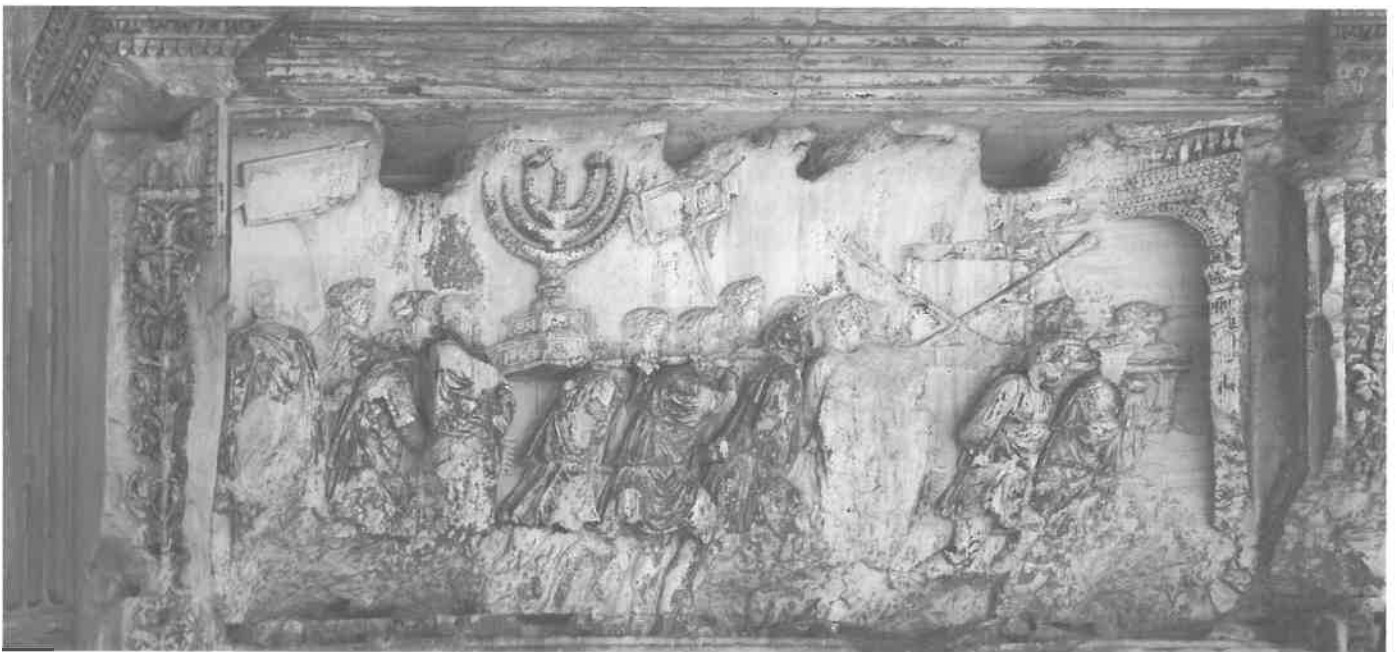
This thirteenth-century fresco is found in the monastery in Serbia. It depicts the apprehension and joy of the women who found Jesus' empty tomb. On their way, they were met by the risen Savior Himself (Matt. 28:5–10).

Orjen



Albrecht Dürer, a sixteenth-century master artist of the German renaissance, created this woodcut depicting the heavenly worship of Jesus, represented as a lamb who was slain (Rev. 5:6).

Houghton Library/Public Domain



The Arch of Titus depicts the destruction of the Second Temple in AD 70. The glory of God which filled the temple in the days of Solomon (2 Chron. 7:1) came to dwell in the person of Jesus.

Paolo Villa