

WORTHY IS THE LAMB

Revelation 5:1-14

Key verses 5: 9-10

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

I thank God for this conference and our theme: “His Kingdom” – the heart and core of Jesus’ teaching. I also thank God for tonight, the 11th of August. It was on this night, nineteen years ago, that the world experienced a total solar eclipse. People from around the world looked up, saw and marvelled at this rare natural phenomenon. But unlike them, we want to focus on a more magnificent scene – that of God’s heavenly Kingdom where myriads of angels and all creatures do one thing – they Worship! As our focus shifts to Jesus – for whom and through whom everything was made, and the One by whom we are restored to God, we begin to express Jesus’ true worth through our worship. As we worship, everything else gets dimmed out and Jesus, God’s precious Lamb, becomes the centre of our worship. So this Worship night is indeed a special night. That’s why through this message, I would like you to find your personal reason to worship Jesus. Find your answer to this question: “*Why is Jesus worthy of my worship?*” If we can all find that reason, our collective worship will be no different from John’s vision of God’s heavenly kingdom when all creatures in heaven and on earth worship Him who sits on the throne and the Lamb. May we renew our worship of the Lamb who purchased us from all nations, languages and peoples, to be a Kingdom— His Kingdom. Amen!

To better understand this passage, we need to refer to Revelation Chapter Four. In a vision, the Apostle John was taken up to heaven where he saw a Throne– the seat of authority. The throne he saw wasn’t unoccupied. God was sitting on it. Around the throne, were four living creatures and 24 elders altogether bowing and praising God endlessly while casting their crowns before the throne. As John was still taking all this in, he saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne, a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. Then a mighty angel proclaimed in a loud voice: **“Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?” (5:2)** You see, opening the scroll was of first importance because it would set in motion the future events that would eventually bring about mankind’s final restoration. But, whoever was to break the seals and open the scroll had to be worthy to do so. What was the response to the mighty angels’ challenge? It was dead silence! No one was found who was worthy to open the scroll and its seals. It was impossible! What is the most impossible thing in the world today? Can I tell you? It was preparing this message! [But thanks be to God for all your prayers, it became possible]. Actually, most things which were impossible yesterday are possible today. Flying seemed impossible before the Wright brothers discovered how to fly. Today’s impossibilities are tomorrow’s possibilities. But there is really that one thing that is totally impossible— it’s opening the scroll. No one could open the scroll because there was no one worthy.

What was John’s reaction to this reality? Verse 4 tells us that John wept and wept because no one worthy was found to open the scroll or to look inside it. Other Bible versions say, he “wept much” (KJV), and most “bitterly” (NLT). We ought to remember that John was living in

a world of cruel injustice, especially against God's elect. I have had the inglorious opportunity to witness injustice. I was part of a UN humanitarian mission to the Zaatari Refugee camp in Northern Jordan. The emotions are indescribable when you come face to face with a 5 year old boy who was rescued after an explosion left him buried in the rubble of the family home; or a 6 year old beautiful girl who is paralysed from the neck down. And most of these children have never had the chance to hear the good news of Jesus Christ! This kind of injustice made me weep. We all have experiences in our lives that have made us weep. That's why I thank God that this Chapter doesn't end in verse 4, otherwise, it would mean endless weeping for us without hope. However, while John was weeping, one of the elders gave him words of encouragement.

Look at what he said to John, **“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.”** (4) The elder pointed John towards someone who could open the scroll. Oh, this is great news! We all need to hear the elder's words: **“Do not weep! See.”** We need to open our spiritual eyes to see that not all hope is lost! What seems impossible to us is possible with God. Isaiah 43:19 says: “See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland”. The truth is, without Christ we go on weeping. But when we carefully **“see,”** we need not weep; rather we discern what greater work God is accomplishing through us! We can **“see”** that we serve God not from a position of weakness, but from a position of strength; not from a position of failure but from a position of final victory. These titles: **“The Lion of the tribe of Judah”** and **“The Root of David”** reveal that Jesus is the Messiah. As a lion, the Messiah is King. When we think of a Lion, we are reminded of its strength, dominion, courage, its menacing presence and it's ROOOAAAAR! If you ever go on an African Safari, make it a point to see Africa's Big Five. These are the Rhino, Buffalo, Elephant, the Leopard and the LION. John expected to see the LION-MESSIAH who would bring justice and vindication to the poor and the weak. He expected the LION-MESSIAH to punish the wicked, killing them with his breath, striking them with the rod of his mouth.

But what did John actually see? He saw a Lamb! I read that the national animal for America is the Bald Eagle; For Ukraine, it's the Bear; For the UK, it's the Lion; and for Korea, it's the Siberian Tiger. But what about God's Kingdom? It's a Lamb. And more than a lamb. It's one that looked as if it had been slain! This lamb was standing at the Centre of the throne encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. What a paradox! The Lamb was slain but still standing! The lamb had seven horns, symbolizing perfect power and omnipotence. And he had seven eyes, symbolizing perfect wisdom and omniscience. Verses 5 and 6 contain a most profound teaching of the Christian faith— that the Lion is the Lamb and the Lamb is the Lion. The essence of the gospel is that the LION came to do the Lamb's work! Wow

So who is this Lamb? It's Jesus. Thirty nine times in the New Testament, Jesus is referred to as the Lamb. In John 1:29, John the Baptist has called Jesus “The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” He was slain and inflicted with many wounds for our sins and iniquities. Jesus still has the marks of the crucifixion. One writer put it this way: *“The only works of man in heaven are the marks we put on Jesus Christ!”* The Lamb was sacrificed to fully atone for our sin. Christ as the Lion is victorious and triumphant because of what Christ

the Lamb has done. What did the Lamb do? Look at verse 7: **“He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne”** Only the Lamb is worthy to take the scroll from God, the Father. Why is the Lamb worthy of worship?

FIRST, THE LAMB IS WORTHY BECAUSE HE WAS SLAIN FOR YOU AND FOR ME. Verse 9 says: **“You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain.”** In this world, a person’s worthiness is measured mostly by their wealth or status— or by how many followers they have on Facebook and Instagram! But the Lamb is worthy because he was slain. The word ‘slain’ literally means *slaughtered*, or *killed by force* or *brutally butchered*. The Lamb didn’t just die but he was brutalized for our sake. Jesus is worthy because he chose weakness for us— for you and me. He chose this violent and shameful death for us. What King on earth would do this— leave his throne— put on the robe of an earthly man— feel the pain of flesh and bone— and die for guilty and nameless subjects? No one! But Jesus did! He paid the ultimate price for us. And he did so willingly too, as he declares: “The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life— only to take it up again.” (John 10:17).

So why was Jesus so brutally slain? Because that was the cost of our purchase. Verse 9b says: **“...and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.”** Every human being needs God’s forgiveness. Today most people don’t believe sin exists, and even if they do, they don’t take it seriously. Most people sin and think nothing of it. But from the time Adam and Eve rebelled against God in the Garden of Eden, sin entered man’s heart like a stain that just wouldn’t go away. We became enemies of God, deserving nothing but judgment and wrath. Our sin attracted a price tag— the blood of a perfect lamb. And so through his blood, the slain Lamb purchased back for God, persons from every tribe, every language, every people and every nation. Jesus died for everybody. By purchasing a kingdom-people at the cross, Jesus proved himself to be the rightful Ruler of the restored Kingdom. Jesus came searching through every tribe, every nation; searching out men and women that he might purchase for God at a high price. Our attendance here at this conference is a testimony to that purchase. Can you imagine that every nation, language, tribe and people will be represented in God’s kingdom? I read that there are about 7,097 languages and about 7.4 billion people in the world today. All of these will be represented in God’s Kingdom because their price has been fully paid up by Jesus! Wow. Praise the Lamb who still purchases people like me and you to this very day. Amen!

SECOND, THE LAMB IS WORTHY BECAUSE HE RESTORES OUR IDENTITY. Look at verse 10: **“You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”** Why did he redeem them? He redeemed them first to be a Kingdom and then to serve as priests. Through the cross, the Lamb has called us into a special relationship with God. We are no longer ordinary citizens. We are priests with direct access to God and with a peculiar responsibility to serve. This is our privilege and identity! I became a campus shepherd in 1997. As a young Bible teacher, I struggled with my identity. Was I really called to serve God? Eventually, distraught and confused, I ran away to the UK to make a fresh start away from God and the Bible. In the UK I lived my life as a free man apart from God’s purpose. But God wasn’t done with me. Like Jonah, God followed me all the way to the UK and reminded me of his love. He sent many Christian brothers to encourage and restore me. Eventually, I abandoned the false hope I had to be free of God. I returned home to Uganda to serve him as the priest God had called me to be. He had restored my true identity since without Christ I had no real identity. Although Uganda is full of corruption, tribalism and

immorality, I remembered my calling as a priest in God's Kingdom to serve such people. As I prepared this message, the importance of my identity became clear to me. I have faced many obstacles in my pioneering work at Uganda Christian University from being misunderstood even to being chased out. But I mustn't lose hope. I have been made a Priest by Jesus the Lamb of God. I need to go back again and again until one disciple is raised. Praise God who still uses us as priests in his Kingdom to serve our God and to reign with Him.

THIRD, THE LAMB IS WORTHY BECAUSE HE RESTORES ALL THINGS. In verses 11-14, the Apostle John saw and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang, **“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”** Can you imagine the scene? Countless angels encircling the throne and singing loudly! And there's more! John heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, proclaiming: **“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!”** The worship that began with just four creatures and 24 elders was now joined by the myriads of angels and now finally by every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea and all that is in them! Here, we can see the final celebration and the grand ending to the story of scripture when God finally restores all things. After the church age has run its course, Christ fully restores everything. Christ is worthy because he restores the original hope that God had for mankind in Eden. All these myriads of angels and all creation worship because Jesus has delivered this whole world from bondage and restored it to its original state and purpose. Every tribe, people, language, nation and all creation all join together in one glorious chorus of our independence from sin— all together worshipping the Father and the Lamb! Such wonder! Such glory! Amen!

These verses show us that the greatest worship service is yet to come. For now, our worship service may seem small with only a few people attending, but we shouldn't be dismayed. We are simply in training for this great service. Someday you and I will be in a throng, along with myriads of angels and other believers praising God in the perfect seven-fold dimension of worship. We will be ascribing Power— Wealth— Wisdom— Strength— Honor— Glory and Blessing to the Lamb. Do you believe this? It's very important that we do. For many people today, instead of worshipping Jesus, they have idolized other unworthy things like wealth, careers or whatever else they think is worthy of worship. What about you? Is Jesus worthy of your worship? Do you ever stop to think about Christ's saving grace upon your life? Are you convicted by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for your sin? When you look at everything in this world and then look at Jesus, can you confess: *“You are truly most worthy to me Jesus, more than anything else in my life!”* If you confess Jesus as your Savior this evening, but cannot wholeheartedly agree that Jesus is worthy, then something is wrong. Only Jesus, the sovereign Lord, our Saviour and God's Lamb is worthy to be worshipped. When we simply accept the worthiness of Jesus, then we can clearly see what the Lord is doing in our church communities, in our mission fields, in our families and in our personal lives. We can live as priests to honor him and bring his Kingdom to the whole world. May this heavenly vision be forever planted in all our hearts and minds now and always. Amen!

