

Christmas in Revelation: The Lion and the Lamb

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[0 : 0 0] If you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand. We'd love to give you a Bible so you can use while you're here. And if you have one with you, please open it to Revelation chapter 5, verses 1 to 14.

We'll cover the whole chapter today. Revelation is the last book of the Bible, so it should be fairly easy to find. Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word.

Father, it is difficult to convey the worthiness of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

But won't you, Lord, by the power of your Holy Spirit, enable me to speak of and enable all of us to listen to and grasp and apply the supreme worthiness of Jesus as the lion and the lamb so that our lives are shaped by that reality so that our life of worship, our sacrifice of praise is spurred on and motivated by that reality so that ultimately all that we do redounds to your glory, Father.

And lead with us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. If you are able, please stand for the reading of God's word from Revelation chapter 5.

[2 : 0 6] Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals. And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it.

And I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. And one of the elders said to me, weep no more.

Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David has conquered so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.

And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

[3 : 3 7] And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

And they sang a new song saying, worthy are you to take scroll and to open its seals. For you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

And you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God and they shall reign on the earth. Then I looked and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders, the voice of many angels numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.

And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is in them, saying, to him who sits on the throne and to the lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever.

and the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshiped. This is God's holy and authoritative word.

[5 : 38] You may be seated. It's not. When people think of great leaders, they often think of charismatic, larger-than-life figures.

Historically, this is what boards of directors would look for when trying to identify and hire CEOs that can take their company to the next level. They'd look for someone with, quote, an extreme personality, an egocentric chief who can lead the corporate charge because, the thinking goes, it takes a certain level of chutzpah, a certain level of arrogance and audacity to be a CEO.

That's the popular thinking at least. But Jim Collins, a business consultant expert and an author of the best-selling book, leadership management book, Good to Great, turned that assumption on its head when he published an article in the Harvard Business Review in 2001 entitled, Level 5 Leadership, The Triumph of Humility and Fierce Resolve.

The article shares the findings of a five-year research that followed 11 companies in order to determine what is required for a good company to become a great company.

Defying all expectations, Collins and his team concluded that they found out that the type of leader who can take a company from being good to great is not the egocentric chief with an extreme personality but, quote, an executive in whom extreme personal humility blends paradoxically with intense professional will.

[7 : 31] This was a groundbreaking publication that upended the conventional wisdom of the leadership management world. But the result should not be surprising to us as Christians because best leaders should take after our God and our God as it says in Isaiah 57, 15 is the one who is high and lifted up who inhabits eternity whose name is holy but that very God also says I dwell in the high and holy place and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly heart.

To revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite. That's what our God is like. He dwells in the high and holy place and with those who are lowly and humble.

And that's what the Holy Spirit is like. He convicts the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment but simultaneously he is also the very spirit who is called the comforter.

our advocate. God's son Jesus also demonstrates that paradoxical blend as we see in our passages today Jesus is the lion of the tribe of Judah who has conquered and yet he is the lamb who was slain.

Jesus is the image of the invisible God by whom all things were created. he is before all things and in him all things hold together. Jesus is preeminent in every way and yet he says in Matthew 11 29 I am lowly and humble in heart.

[9 : 20] He's meek and gentle. That's the glory of our God. Revelation 5 teaches us that Jesus is worthy to execute God's sovereign judgment because he died and rose again to ransom people for God from every nation.

And we're going to talk about how he is first the conquering lion and then the slain lamb and finally the worthy Lord. Let's look at how Jesus is presented to us as the conquering lion.

It says in verse one then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back sealed with seven seals.

So in his vision Jesus sees the one who is seated on the throne. We saw that last week in chapter four the thrice holy God seated on the throne. He notices holding a scroll in his right hand so you're right here and the one seated on the throne is God in all his glory the sovereign king and creator who is worthy of all glory and honor and power we saw that last week and he's holding this scroll the fact that God's holding this scroll in his right hand is significant because right hand is most people's dominant hand that's the hand with you which you hold something securely everybody wants to be the person's someone's right hand man no one when you are trying to uphold someone when God assures his people Israel that he will be with them he tells them in Isaiah 41 10 fear not for I am with you be not dismayed for I am your God I will strengthen you and help you I will uphold you with my righteous right hand not the left hand because that's the strong hand

I mean God doesn't have weakness he authority that's in his hand in his right hand in particular earlier in revelation one Jesus was described as the one who in his right hand holds the seven stars which represents the seven angelic representatives of the seven churches to whom Jesus writes in chapters two and three so this is sovereign authority and it conveys the importance and the weightiness of this document that God holds it securely in his right hand and the same is true for the fact that this scroll is sealed with seven seals we've talked many times throughout revelation already of how the number seven is symbolic because God created the completed his creation work in seven days so seven is a number that signifies fullness and completeness and this scroll is tightly sealed with seven seals so imagine this is like a top secret document it's that requires the highest level of security clearance and this is what

[12 : 21] God revealed to prophet Daniel in Daniel 12 4 and at that time Daniel was told by God to shut up the words and seal up the book until the time of the end but now what Daniel had sealed up is about to be opened and this scroll bears striking resemblance to legal wills in the Roman empire and it's possible that John also has this background in view a Roman will had to be witnessed and sealed by seven witnesses a Roman will had its contents sometimes summarized on the back so not only inside but also on the back just like this one a Roman will was unsealed only after the death of the testator the one who made the will and at that point when the testator dies a trustworthy executor was put in charge of putting the will into effect to carrying out its wishes its decrees so to speak and so here

Jesus is serving both as the testator the one who died and the executor of the will and what exactly is this scroll what's in its content the scroll is an illusion and this is the primary background Ezekiel chapter 2 verses 9 to 10 where God gives prophet Ezekiel a scroll and the scroll it says had writing on the front and on the back just like this one and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe it contained God's judgment of the rebellious house of Judah so likewise this scroll in revelation contains the words of lamentation and mourning and woe but this time the scope is universal it doesn't just pertain to the house of Judah the nation of Israel it pertains to all those who are in rebellion against God in this world and this is a judgment it contains God's sovereign judgment over the wicked but at the same time it's also a vindication of the righteous the righteous that are being persecuted and killed by the wicked are vindicated and then they finally receive the inheritance that

God had promised to them as the seals are broken and the scroll is opened so to summarize this scroll is God's ultimate end time game plan and when you hear end time I don't want you to just hear distant future because as we've been talking about in Revelation and this is not of the distant future but it's actually of the present age because the New Testament tells that Jesus has already ushered in the end times and we see that in Acts 2 when Apostle Peter preaches he says the last days that that prophet Joel prophesied of in Joel 2 28 to 32 is here already and being fulfilled because the Holy Spirit has been poured out on us and Jesus says in John 4 23 the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth I think that's in the

Holy Spirit and that so that hour that was prophesied of that end time the last days are already here it's not yet fully here it's not yet the end has already begun so in this sense the scroll represents God's ultimate end time game plan and this demonstrates God's sovereignty the end of the ages has already been written and this is a source of amazing comfort for us as believers when we read a thrilling novel right imagine a good book that's a page turner you just keep reading and you keep reading and you can't put it down because you don't know what happens next and you really want to know what happens next if you're one of those people who go to the end of the book and read the ending first and then come back

I don't know what to say to you yeah I don't think that's how it was meant to be read but in this case it's the reader is in suspense while reading the book but the author is not in suspense because he wrote the book he created the characters he planned the character development he devised the narrative arc and he wrote down the conclusion already God is the author of history he has already written how the ending of the book will go and he holds that book that scroll sovereignly in his right hand do you believe that most Christians I think in their heads know that God is sovereign but do you really believe that God is sovereign in your heart that he is sovereign over all of history and over all the details of your lives

[17 : 44] Matthew 10 29 to 31 tells us that not even a sparrow the cheapest the most common bird in nature even a sparrow not even a sparrow falls to the ground apart from the father's will he says in that same verse even the hairs of our head are all numbered it's all accounted for you lose dozens of hair every day and that's all accounted for it's all you can rest assured that God is still sovereign God says in Isaiah 45 verse 7 I form light and create darkness I make well being and create calamity I am the Lord who does all these things God is in sovereign control over what we might perceive to be good and what we might perceive to be bad and in both of those things God is working intimately and ultimately for his own glory and for the good of those who love him so they might be conformed to the image of his son it says in

Proverbs 1633 that even the lot the seemingly most random thing dice that you throw onto the table even the lot that is cast into the lap is decided by the Lord God psalm 139 16 says your eyes saw me when I was formless all my days were written in your book and planned before a single one of them began that that's what this represents when something is written in a book that means it's already decided it's already written it has been planned long ago and all of human history and God's end time game plan is already written on this scroll and God holds it in his right hand I'm not negating human responsibility we have to make real choices and we do have real responsibility but but you can be rest you can rest assured that

God is sovereign over all of your decisions even all of your mistakes even all of your faults the setbacks and mistakes that you regret today are in the palm of God's hands surprises and tragedies that you did not anticipate in your life they're all in the palm of God's hands your physical and emotional constitution your health your family background your future are all in the palm of God's right hand so don't ever despair over your life don't ever despair over what you see in your own life don't ever despair over what you see around you don't despair over what you see in the news the end is already written and there's nothing anyone can do to thwart

God's plan but what if what if God's plan is thwarted what would that be like there's a temporary but agonizing suspense in verses two to four that raises that very question it says and I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals and no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it a mighty angel asks proclaims who is worthy to open that scroll in the right hand of God Almighty not just anyone can look into that scroll not anyone can execute

God's end time game plan no you have to have proper authorization you have to be worthy and when that question is there's a heavy crushing silence and John looks around nervously maybe that mighty angel maybe the archangel Michael maybe the angel Gabriel oh the elders the 24 elders Judah the apostles the representatives of all the people of God apostle Peter the head the leader among the apostles apostle Paul the greatest missionary author of majority of the New Testament for us who could that be

[23 : 11] Mother Teresa Billy Graham as John nervously looks around not a single soul pipes up to say me I'm worthy a deafening silence no one is worthy and John says I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it John is not shedding a single tear in silence he says he's weeping loudly this is a heaving sob that breaks forth from the chest and convulsing and trying to catch his breath he's crying wailing from the sorrows in the deepest recesses of his heart why because if no one can open the scroll

God's happy ending to this story is not to be the redemption of all of God's people is not to be the final judgment of the wicked and the evil doers who oppose God is not to be so he weeps William Hendrickson in the book about revelation title more than conquerors puts it well the fact that no one can open the scroll means no protection for God's children in the hours of bitter trial no judgment upon a persecuting world no ultimate triumph for believers no new heaven and earth no future inheritance and that thought is so devastating to John that he wails can you imagine being in that throne room your desperate hope someone someone please open the scroll and you are not worthy and I am not worthy no one is worthy

I hope we can feel just the weight of this reality only Jesus can bring God's salvation history to its climactic conclusion because he is the only savior and redeemer and that means and this is good news that you and I are not the saviors of this world you are not the savior that this world is looking for and you are not the savior you and I are not the savior of this church you and I are not the savior of our respective families you and I cannot even save ourselves there is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved and that is the name of Jesus Christ are you trying to live your life to make much of your name or of the name of Jesus who cares people know our names our names cannot save it's only the name of Jesus that saves and John as John is weeping he's interrupted by one of the elders in verse five weep weep no more behold the lion of the tribe of Judah the root of David has conquered so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals it's an amazing scene

Jesus is the root of David he's the fulfillment of the prophecy that there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse that's David's father and a branch from its root shall bear fruit that's a prophecy about the Davidic dynasty and the Messiah that will come from the Davidic line so Jesus is the one who fulfills that prophecy and remember that story of David and Goliath from 1st Samuel 17 famous story I'm sure all of you guys have heard it the Philistine army and the Israeli army are arrayed against each other in battle formation and they have what is called the battle of the champions a single combat to decide the outcome of the war and Goliath a giant the representative of the Philistine army comes out and every single day he taunts the Israeli army and every single day he defies the Lord God of Israel and says who can defeat me and that happens day after day after day and men he's totally emasculated the army of Israel they all cower before him they bow their heads in shame and no one comes up because no one is worthy no one can defeat

Goliath how sad and tragic is that picture and then one day David comes and he goes and this is what he says to Goliath you come to me with the sword and with the spear and with the javelin but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts the God of the armies of Israel whom you have defied this day the Lord will deliver you into my hand and I will strike you down and cut off your head that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into our hand and David with the sling slays Goliath and the entire army is victorious that's what it means here that Jesus is the root of David because David is a foreshadowing and he's a type of the

[29 : 30] Messiah to come the Jesus to come he's the one who fights the battle of the champions that no one else can fight Jesus is the one who went to the battlefield to fight the battle and defeat the enemy that we could never hope to defeat because he is the lion of the tribe of Judah who has conquered who of us can face Satan the accuser who accuses to our face and exposes and points out every sin that you have committed every way in which we are unworthy who can stand who can stand and fight against them who of us can defeat death when death is the wages of sin and we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God who can stand before our enemy no one is worthy except for the lion of Judah who has conquered and that's an allusion to Genesis 49 8-10 when in his prophetic blessing of his son

Jacob prophesied that Judah is a lion's cub and that from his line the scepter will not depart rulers will come from Judah the messianic king the lion will come from the tribe of Judah and that is Jesus and he has conquered that word conquer as you guys have seen already is a key word throughout the book of Revelation at the end of each of the letters to the seven churches that we have seen Jesus ends the letter with the same line he offers them a promise of eternal life and of the kingdom of God and a heavenly reward and he begins that promise always by saying to the one who conquers I will give this to the one who conquers and so this is it's going back to that that language here and it's telling us that Jesus has conquered and so if you want to conquer if you want to be one who receives those promises of God then you need to do what

Jesus did you need to follow in his footsteps and that raised the question well how exactly did Jesus conquer it tells us in verses 6 to 9 and that's where we see that Jesus is not only the line the conquering line but he's the slain lamb he says in verse 6 and between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a lamb standing as though it had been slain with seven horns and with seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth there's a deliberate shocking juxtaposition here between what John hears and what John sees he hears the lion of the tribe of Judah has conquered but then when he turns to look he doesn't see a mighty roaring lion he sees a slain lamb it's not saying here that he only looked like he was slain as though it had slain can be misinterpreted that way but that's not what it means you can see clearly in verse nine that he was slain and this is a profound revelation of who

Jesus is and how we ought to follow him as Christians people have a hard time with this reality sometimes they want God to be a conquering lion but not the slain lamb Jews had a hard time accepting the fact that their long awaited Messiah was the crucified king who bore the curse of sin in our place Muslims likewise revere Jesus as a prophet but they do not worship him as the son of God as the 24 elders and the living creatures do here in our passage they despise the idea that Jesus suffered and died a Christian missionary once shared this excerpt from a Muslim poem that he found entitled a wonderful question for the people of the cross and it goes like this you who worship

Jesus I have a question for you can you answer it if Jesus was almighty God with power to strike terror into all men why do you believe that the Jews can make him endure the agony of the cross and why do you believe that God died and was buried in the dust and sought from his creatures a draught of water that he might quench his fiery thirst people have a hard time stomaching the idea of the son of God being the slain lamb fear fearless conquerors are often given the epithet the lion I'm sure some of you history buffs can name a few off the top of your head Henry the third one of the most powerful German princes of the 12th century who conquered most of central Europe was known as Henry the lion Richard the first the king

[35 : 02] Richard king of England we got some Englishers here or from the 12th century was known as Richard the lion heart because of his military prowess and leadership Louis the 13th century king of France who conquered half of England was nicknamed the lion Umar Ghazi the 14th century Tarcoman chieftain who repeatedly fought off the crusaders and was famous for his naval expeditions was called Umar the lion perhaps because of his thunderous oratory skills or because of his courage and unyielding leadership during the war against the Nazis in World War II when Winston Churchill was photographed in that famous photo where he is leaning on a chair in his suit it's a black and white photo I'm sure you guys have seen this and he's scowling at the photographer because he was annoyed he took his cigar and that picture was titled The

Roaring Lion but none of those men that history calls great men were ever known as the lamb and especially not a slain lamb that would destroy morale can you imagine if Winston Churchill during World War II was known as the slain lamb but that's exactly what Jesus did and that's precisely why these men are not worthy to open the scroll but Jesus is and that's why the song of praise in verse 9 says worthy are you to take the scroll and to open the seals for you were slain Jesus' death is integral to his worthiness to open the scroll the son of

God had to become a son of man and he had to die as the representative of man in order to redeem them and I think this is why God the father doesn't simply open the scroll that's not his salvation plan as Hebrews 2 14 15 tells us in order to redeem mankind the redeemer had to share in their flesh and blood so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death that is the devil and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery only the lamb who was slain can open the scroll the image of the lamb of course has a rich biblical heritage in Genesis 22 when the Lord God tests Abram and tells him to sacrifice his only son Isaac Abram has faith that God would even raise him from the dead because he had already promised to him that his descendants would come through

Isaac and so in faith he goes and as they're going Isaac poignantly asks his dad father behold the fire and the wood but where is the lamb for the burnt offering and then Abram says son the Lord God will supply the lamb and of course God intervenes in the last minute spares Isaac and provides a ram that sacrifice in place of Isaac and in this way it's Jesus whose sacrifice restores us as his son as we are called the people of God in Exodus 3 to the father's arms as we read in our assurance of pardon this morning in Isaiah 53 it prophesied of the coming Messiah that he would bear our griefs and carry our sorrows that he be pierced for our transgressions and that he would be crushed for our iniquities that he would be like a lamb that is led to the slaughter who is silent before its shearers we were the sinful rebellious sheep that had gone astray all to our own ways but

Jesus who was perfectly obedient he took our place and died in our place so that we can be restored to the fold of the great shepherd and perhaps most prominently the lamb of God is an allusion to the Passover in Exodus 12 when God was delivering Israel from their slavery in Egypt he instructed the Israelites to take a lamb without blemish and to kill it and to take some of its blood and to daub it on the lintel and the doorpost of the houses so that the blood may be the symbol to them and blood of the lamb so they can be spared from the wrath of the destroyer that God sends throughout Egypt in judgment and so Paul says in 1st Corinthians 5:7 Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed it's the blood of Jesus shed for us Jesus death on our behalf that averts the judgment and punishment that we deserve and frees us from our slavery to sin

[40 : 25] Jesus is the fulfillment of all of these biblical imageries and more about the lamb of God and note that in all of those images that we just talked about and there are others in all of them every single one of those images the lamb dies and that's the point Jesus conquered by being slain Jesus won by losing and that's the pattern that we have to follow if we want to be ones who conquer and inherit the promises of God 1 Peter 2:19-25 tells us that Jesus was reviled but he did not revile in return he suffered unjustly yet he did not threaten instead he entrusted himself to God who judges justly and in that same passage Peter tells us that in this manner Jesus suffered so that for us he could leave an example so that we might follow in his steps and that word translated example was used at the time to refer to a pattern of alphabet letters over which children would write and learn to write they would trace and that's how they would learn the the

Greek alphabet so it's really like a stencil so it's a much maybe even stronger word than a pattern or an example Jesus is suffering and death is the stencil according to which our own life is supposed to be written does your life trace the self sacrifice of Christ or does it trace the lines of self exaltation and self promotion of this world does your life trace the humility of Christ that looks out for the interest of others or does it trace the lines of ease and comfort that this world falsely offers does your life trace the submission of Christ to his father and obedience to his father in his crucifixion and death or does your life trace instead the allure of power and prestige in this world we can get a glimpse of what our society is like

I think and what our political discourse is like from just scanning the clickbait to YouTube headlines it seems like everybody wants to watch videos where so and so owns so and so and so you guys know exactly what I'm talking about so and so destroys so and so so and so humiliates so and so so and so embarrasses so and so we love the idea of resistance vive la revolution but that's the way of the dragon not the way of the lamb where are the Christians who are willing to lose arguments to win the person where are the Christians who are willing to confess their sins in vulnerability rather than putting on pretensions of invincibility where are the

Christians who are willing to be crushed by their persecutors and by their enemies rather than destroying their enemies where are the Christians who are willing to give up their selfish ambitions and their rights and their entitlements to give away their wealth and to give away their possessions and to give away even their very lives to bear witness to the slain lamb of God so that you can say my life that's the picture of what Jesus did for you will you succumb to this world by following its pattern its stencil or will you overcome by following the pattern of Jesus Christ but we must not mistake the lamb's humility as weakness we see the lamb's resurrection power here too because even though the lamb has been slain we see in verse 6 the lamb is standing it's amazing that's a sign of Christ's victorious resurrection Jesus died but he did not stay dead he rose from the dead that's why he's still standing and not only that verse 6 says that the lamb has seven horns seven eyes which are the seven spirits of

God sent out into all the earth the horns are a symbol of power and authority as we see clearly in the prophetic visions of Daniel 7 and that's what that's alluding to and the eyes are a symbol of knowledge and vision and here more specifically referring to the Holy Spirit so Jesus has the fullness of spirit that's why he says he has the seven spirits of God the sets of seven all describe the completeness or the fullness of Jesus's attributes so in other words Jesus has all power his seven horns Jesus has all knowledge he has seven eyes he is omnipotent and omniscient and yet he was slain so that by his blood he might ransom people for God as it says in verses 9 to 10 from every tribe and language and people and nation that he might make them a kingdom and priest to our God who reign on the earth the four full repetition of those terms that are similar tribe language people and nation they imply the universality of God's saving work the number four is often used symbolically in revelation to refer to the entire earth that or the all of creation so he speaks of the four winds from the four corners of the earth in revelation 7 and or the four corners of the earth in revelation 20 verse 8 and so here when he says four times the tribe the language and people and nation he's telling us that God's people will be made up of people from every nation and from everywhere that means he saves not the

[47 : 15] Jews only but also you and me includes all of us we who are once far off have been brought near we who are once unclean spiritual lepers have been made to stand in the temple of God to be the temple of God to be priests of God we who are once treasonous rebels have been made to reign with him as kings in the kingdom of God that's the mercy that Christ shows and we should be grateful that he is a slain lamb of God because he is only the line of Judah who came to conquer all of his enemies with the force of his might we would have all been crushed and because Jesus is the lion and the lamb we now must go and tell these nations every nation tribe people and language about what

Jesus has done and about who he is because he deserves to be worshipped and praised by all of them God has already ordained people from all of these nations and ethnic and linguistic people groups to come to know him and to worship him and that's why we can with confidence go to the ends of the earth to make disciples of all nations and we see finally the picture of Jesus as the worthy Lord in verses 11 to 14 note how in verse 8 Jesus took that scroll from the right hand of God think about the audacity of that the one seated on the throne though thrice holy God holding it in his right hand no one is worthy to take it except Jesus and he takes it and immediately as he takes it the four living creatures which we talked about how represents kind of these attributes of God these angelic representatives all of all the creatures on earth they're kind of the heads they represent each other as heads of all the respective categories of animals and creatures the 24 elders elders represent all the people of God the 12 tribes the heads of tribes of Israel the old covenant people of God and the 12 apostles were the foundation of the new covenant people of

God the church they all fall down before the lamb in worship and adoration the 24 elders even pick up harps they assume the role of worship leaders which is reminiscent of the 24 orders of the Levites who are charged with leading the music in the house of the Lord there were 24 orders of them and these 24 elders representative of that first chronicles 25 6 and it says that they were entrusted with symbols harps and lyres for the service of God so I like to imagine that probably fitting that scene the harps are representative instruments but not the only instruments so I imagine harps strings lyres symbols joining in in worship of the slain lamb of God the elders are also holding a golden bowl each holding a golden bowl full of incense which are the prayers of the saints and then means right now as that heavenly worship is going on all the prayers that we utter as the saints of God are resounding in worship in heaven and they sing a new song because Christ has done a new thing in our midst as God had promised to do in Isaiah 43 he has made us forget our former pain and our former sins because he has brought about a new creation for all of eternity he's worthy to be praised with the new song forever and ever this is why I've spoken to Wes about this our worship leader the leader of our music ministry team I pray for this and I pray that God would use people in our church to write songs of praise worship to God that we might even be able to sing corporately as a body of Christ and maybe it'll even be taken up who knows by sovereign grace music and maybe they'll sing it and record it that's how they get most of their songs it's written by people in other sovereign grace churches not many of you know this but I've been writing worship songs as well since a young age I haven't done in a while and I wrote one recently and I don't play it for anyone because they're terrible I played it for my wife and she kindly told me it's okay but I write them anyway because I want to sing a new song to God and I want to write thousands of songs even if no one else sings it because God is worthy of it because Jesus is worthy to be sung with a new song every day because his excellencies are infinite his worth is infinite and I can't wait until I get to partake in this chorus that we see in verses 11 to 14 first right immediately the 24 elders and the four living creatures immediately around the throne at the center God's throne is at the center of this heavenly gathering the king ruling above among his people above his people and then so immediately around the throne the four living creatures and and the 24 elders bow down in worship and they're singing songs and they're cymbals and lyres and and harps and the music is resounding and that's already a pretty significant chorus and then and then it says in verse 11 then I looked and I heard around the throne and around the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels

numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands and myriad is 10,000 but it's a word that often refers to an innumerable number of people an innumerable throng and so imagine these concentric circles there's a small circle and then there's a concentric circle around it as the elders the 24 elders are bowing down before Jesus in worship and as the living creatures four living creatures are worshiping him he hears tens of thousands and thousands upon thousands of angels raising their voices and extolling the virtues of our slain and risen Savior Jesus Christ and as they're worshiping him that's not the end there's more it says in verse 12 and 13 and I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is in them say to him who sits on the throne and to the lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever all creation around the angels now you can't even see them praising

God in one voice praising Jesus this is the highest statement of the deity of Christ the divinity of Christ that you can find in the Bible he is praised side by side with the one who is seated on the throne to him who sits on the throne and to the lamb we're gonna get to join that one day and this our gathering is a foretaste of that and we'll only want to be a part of that throng if we know that Jesus is the lion and the lamb who is worthy because he was slain for the redemption of his people for the glory of

[56 : 02] God so let's pray that God would make that more of reality in our lives Lord Jesus Lord Jesus we love you we worship you and we live for the day when people from every tribe and nation and tongue and people will praise you together along with all of us

Lord we long for that day we live for that day and then and your glory all that comes to you will redound to the father God captivate our hearts with that amazing glorious picture that that that future that glorious future that is ours and is already written in your book capture us with that reality so that we honor you rightly so that we serve you wholeheartedly so that we love you in Jesus name we pray amen