

Revelation 5 – Jesus is Worthy

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[0 : 00] If you have a Bible, turn with me to Revelation chapter 5. And as you do that, let's just pray again really quickly. Father, thank you for your word.

Lord, we come to it, Lord, and we want to say, Lord, that whatever you are saying, whatever your spirit is saying to us, Lord, you are right and we are wrong. Lord, we come to your word, Lord, and we want to have humble hearts to receive, to accept.

Lord, but also, Lord, we want to be ready. Lord, to put these things into action. Lord, forgive us for being dull hearers.

Lord, we want to be eager and ready to receive what you have to say. So help us, we pray this morning by your spirit. In Jesus' name, amen, amen.

All right, today I brought along some of the most valuable things I own in all of the world. These things have incredible worth.

[1 : 08] And I actually even toyed with the idea of bringing them today. Are you ready? You want to see? You want to see them? So this is this, they're in here.

And the first one, if I can get it out without revealing the other, is this.

Now, some of you are probably old enough to recognize it instantly. Some of you are like, what on earth is that?

This is my grandfather's driving license. The earliest, renewed every three years. The earliest, it goes back to 1963, which is almost like a different age of cars.

Right? Where I am told the indicators on the cars, when they were introduced, were little flaps that stuck out.

[2 : 15] That you operated with a piece of string. This is one of the most valuable things in my house. It has incredible worth.

You can't buy this from me. You can try. But you can't buy this from me. There's another two things in this box, which also are of incredible worth.

And there's some mystery surrounding this. Actually, this box itself is my grandfather's box. But anyway. Anyway. These two things here, which you will instantly recognize, are World War II service medals.

This one, World War II service medal, North Atlantic medal, World War II. And this one is Northern Italy service medal, British service medal.

And we're not too sure what that one is in the middle. These, we're pretty sure, did not belong to my grandfather. Mainly because he served in the Second World War.

[3 : 31] But we're pretty sure that he didn't serve in Italy and he didn't serve in the North Atlantic. But these were valuable to him enough to store them in this box for over 50 years.

You can't buy those from me. They have incredible worth. But if you were to see them at a car boot sale, mostly they'd be left on the table and unsold.

Because when it comes to value, some things are determined by what you give them. The worth of something is ascribed, given to how I give it.

There are other things that are intrinsically valuable, aren't there? Life. From the womb to the grave. Intrinsically valuable.

Does it need a reason other than that every life is made in the image of God? And so there are some things that we give value to and in themselves may not be very valuable at all.

[4 : 55] There are some things that are incredibly valued just because they are valuable. And we ask the question pretty much every single day, is it worth it?

Pretty much every single day, we go through some kind of judgment in our mind. Is what I'm doing or is what I'm about to do or what I have done worth it?

For example, you take your car to the garage. And they say, it's going to cost you £900 to fix the car. And what you do is ask yourself, is that worth it?

Is that rust bucket worth that kind of money to have it fixed? Like I only bought it for £500. So you have to ask the question and then answer the question, is it worth it?

On Tuesday, England are playing Wales in the World Cup. And a few of us are going to watch it together. And a few of us watched the last game together.

[6 : 05] And I think we came away from that thinking, was that worth it? I've already asked myself the question about Tuesday, is it worth it?

Is it going to be worth my time? Is it going to be worth my effort? Judging on the performance from Friday, is it worth it? And so the question we're talking about today is this.

Is Jesus worth it? Is Jesus worth it? We're in Revelation chapter 5. The context is that John is seeing a vision of heaven.

In John chapter 4, he's been taken into heaven. And he's seen this glorious scene of the throne room of God. And John is in this kind of mind-blowing experience of seeing worship, the worship of God in the very throne room of heaven.

It is a kaleidoscope of colours, sights and sounds. God the Father is sitting on the throne. He is clothed in majesty and power.

[7 : 14] He is shining like the most precious stones. Surrounding him is this emerald green rainbow. And in front of him is the sea of glass.

And around the throne, encircling his throne, are 24 other thrones with 24 angelic beings clothed in white, wearing golden crowns.

And inside the circle of thrones, there are four angels that are just completely indescribable. And they're singing.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, who was and who is and who is to come. And the sound of the singing, the 24, fall down on their faces to the ground and worship.

And they sing, worthy are you, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power. For you created all things and by your will, they exist and are created.

[8 : 12] An amazing scene. And all of that sets us up for Revelation 5, where John sees four new scenes.

And you can mark them as a kind of outline if you want to, as we go through four scenes, all marked by the phrase, I saw or I looked. And here's the first one in verse one.

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.

There is a lot of debate as to what this scroll is. There are a couple of other places that refer to a sealed scroll or a sealed book. If you want to do your own reading at your own time, Isaiah 29, Ezekiel 2 and Daniel 12.

But really the only satisfactory answer to the question of what this scroll is, is to see it as representing ownership of the world.

[9 : 24] Or as we go through Christ's ownership of the world. And to see the opening of the seals. And I must admit, when I became a Christian, Revelation was actually one of the things that the church that I joined was going through.

And they came to the seals. I'm like, what on earth? A seals. Now you understand that they're wax seals. They're not the creature that lives in the sea. Because for the longest time, I was like, I know that Revelation is a mysterious book, but I didn't think it was that mysterious.

Like what's the deal with the seals? They're seals, candle wax, imprint to seal a letter. Okay? So just in case you are on the same wavelength as I was when I first came to read that, right?

They're not seals, sea lions. And so the really only satisfactory answer to what is this scroll? The scroll is the ownership of the world.

And to see the opening of the seals as Jesus preparing the earth for his reign on it. So to see that, all we have to do is turn to Jeremiah 32 as one example, where we pick up the story at a point where King Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, before the Babylonian captivity, instead of listening to what God is saying through Jeremiah about how he could live through the siege, how he could live through the Babylonian captivity, instead of listening to God, he threw God's messenger, Jeremiah, into prison.

[11 : 01] So I'm not going to listen to God. I'm going to listen to myself, my own counsel, and I'm going to throw the messenger of God into prison. And so Jeremiah asked him this in verse 7, Behold, Hanamiel, the son of Shulam, your uncle, will come to you and say, Buy my field that is in Hanathoth, for the right of redemption by purchase is yours.

Then Hanamiel, my cousin, came to me in the court of the guard in accordance with the word of the Lord and said to me, Buy my field that is in Hanathoth, in the land of Benjamin, for the right of possession and redemption is yours.

Buy it for yourself. Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord. And I bought the field in Hanathoth from Hanamiel, my cousin, and weighed out the money to him, 17 shekels of silver. I signed the deal, sealed it, got witnesses, weighed the money on scales. Then I took the sealed deed of purchase containing the terms and conditions of the open copy, and I gave the deed of purchase to Baruch, the son of Nera, son of Mahist, whoever that is, in the presence of Hanamiel, my cousin, in the presence of the witnesses who signed the deed of purchase and in the presence of all the Judeans, who were sitting in the court of God.

Now look, look at this picture. King Zedekiah throws Jeremiah into prison, and Jeremiah's immediate response is, do you know about Hanamiel and Shulam, the king and the field that is in Hanath?

[12 : 29] It's not, why are you throwing me into prison? What have I done? You should be listening to God. He's like, do you know my cousin? Do you know my cousin's got a field? Like, isn't that the strangest response?

But of course, this is a setup, because what Jeremiah is referring to is a title deed. It is proof of ownership over a piece of property. That's what the scroll in Revelation 5 is.

And in the example in Jeremiah, it's written on one side. Did you notice that? In the example in Revelation, it's written on both sides. Now we know that both Romans and Jews had the same way of transferring ownership.

In fact, Vespasian and Titus, the Roman emperors, used the same method to hand off their emperors.

In the first century, and here's the cool thing, the only time a title deed was written on the outside is when the owner of the property had a debt to pay.

[13 : 40] Now make note of this. So normally, the title deed, the events, and the particulars about the property were written on the inside. He had to break the seal to get to the content on the inside.

Unless there was a debt to pay. And that was written on the outside. And then it was sealed seven times. And as you pay a bit of your debt off, a seal was broken.

A bit more, another seal was broken. A bit more, another seal was broken. And so the debts were written on the outside of the scroll, then sealed seven times.

Then the scroll would be given to the bank or the lender until such time the debt was paid. Now what's fascinating actually in the story of Jeremiah is that the name Hanamiel means the grace of God and Shulam means paid.

There's no mistakes. There's no mistakes. When part of the debt was repaid, the seal would be broken until the whole debt repaid and the title deed then returned to the owner.

[14 : 44] This is exactly what is happening in Revelation 5. God the Father is holding the scroll, the proof of ownership. But the problem is, is that there are seven seals and there is writing on the outside, which means there are debts outstanding.

And currently ownership of the property outlined within the scroll belongs to someone else. Who is that someone else?

Well, both Paul and Jesus say that that someone else is Satan. So 2 Corinthians 4, verse 4, Paul says that the God of this world Now that's not Jesus.

Just so you're not confused. Paul says that there is a God and he is a God of this world. And what has he done? He has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God.

There is a God of this world. Jesus says in John chapter 12 that there is a ruler of this world and one day he will be cast out. So this scroll symbolizes the ownership of the world, the seals are symbolic of the debt that is owed.

[16 : 02] And what we're going to read in this chapter is Jesus stepping up to claim the world with proof that the debt has been paid. And then in chapters 6 to 19, which is where all the scary, crazy

stuff happens in Revelation, The breaking of the seal is God preparing the earth for Jesus to take hold of it, for Jesus to rain on it.

So look at verse 2. So we've seen the scroll. Now look at the second scene, verse 2. He says, And I saw a mighty angel.

Like, just stop there. Because before, John has attempted to describe the angels he's seen, right? With this one, he's like, Nah, he's just big and strong. That's all you need to know. Right?

So he's a mighty angel. And he is proclaiming with a loud voice. Like, one thing I get to see in heaven, and I've come away thinking, is that nothing is ever done in small measure in heaven, is it? Do you know what I mean? Like, in a minute, we're going to read about myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands. It's just not ones and twos. Right? There's a mighty angel. He's not just an angel. He's a mighty angel.

[17:20] He's just not, he's not whispering. He's shouting with a loud voice. Proclaiming with a loud voice. What is he proclaiming? Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seal?

There is a shout across the universe to everything that is visible and invisible. It is an open challenge. This is the challenge.

Does anyone have the worth to do the task that is at hand? Can anyone break the debt and break the seal? Pay the debt and break the seal. Is anyone worthy?

Verse 3, And just get this phrase. And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or even look into it.

No one in heaven or on earth or under the earth. None of the angels. None of the 24 elders. None of the four living creatures. Not this mighty angel.

[18:25] No one was worthy. No one on the earth. No king. No queen. No prime minister.

No president. No influencer. No celebrity. No one was worthy. No one under the earth. No Abraham. Isaac.

Jacob. David. Solomon. Isaiah. Peter. Paul. None of them was worthy. And so the answer to this question, who is worthy?

Silence. And John seeing that, honestly confesses in verse 4, I began to weep loudly.

Because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. Look, here's the deal. If no one is found worthy, no one breaks the seal.

[19:26] Debt is still debt. Sin is still sin. Separation from God is still separation from God. Evil wins. Like that's a right response to not finding people worthy or anyone worthy, isn't it?

And so the question John is simply asking and potentially why he's crying is, was it worth it? Has my life been living a lie?

Has my dedication and faithfulness to the Lord for these 90 years been worth it? Has my torture and my imprisonment on this island been worth it? And for us, we can ask a similar question, can't we?

If there is no one worthy, then what am I to make of my life? Are all the struggles and the challenges, all the heartbreaks and groanings inside me, will they ever be made right?

What about all the illness and the sickness and the problems that life throws at us? Do they have a purpose? And for John, the reality of what he sees comes to him in a wave and he breaks down and he weeps.

[20:44] Why? Because no one was found. And then verse 5, one of the elders, that's one of the angelic beings we saw in chapter 4, said to me, weep no more.

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

So the elder says, there is one worthy. Stop crying. There is one. There's good news. And he gives him two names.

Two names. He calls him the lion of the tribe of Judah, which takes us all the way back to Genesis chapter 49, doesn't it? Right? So in Genesis 49, and I would encourage you to read this at some point, where Jacob calls his 12 sons together and he's going to pronounce blessing and prophecy over them.

And he goes through one. He goes, this is what is going to become of your life and your tribe. And he goes to the next, this is what's going to become of your life and your tribe. And he gets to Judah and this is what he says.

[21 : 57] Verse nine of Genesis 49, he says, Judah is a lion's cub. From the prey, my son, you've gone up. He stood down, he crouched as a lion, as a lioness, who dare rouse him.

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet until tribute comes to him and to him shall be the obedience of all peoples. So what he's prophesying over Judah is that power and authority would be his belonging to his tribe until the coming of Messiah. And that right to rule remained with Judah all the way through, actually, all the way through to Babylonian captivity, all the way through to Medo-Persian captivity, all the way through the Greeks and even the Romans, all the way up to 12 AD.

Write it down, 12 AD, really important date, 12 AD. Judah had managed to keep power and authority all the way through from Genesis 49 all the way through to 12 AD.

And then what happened in the spring 12 AD? Well, in spring 12 AD, there's two things happening. Number one, the Romans issue a decree declaring that the Jewish people would no longer be able to carry out capital punishment.

[23 : 27] The rabbi's response to that decree was immediate. They understood that capital punishment was the cornerstone of government as defined in the Noahic covenant.

literally, their right to rule was being removed. That wasn't necessarily the problem. So what they understood was no government, no capital punishment, no government, no nation.

So what did they do? They ran into the streets, they started ripping their clothes and beating themselves horrendously. To use the language of Genesis 49, the scepter, the right to rule, had departed.

Authority had gone. But that wasn't the problem. The problem was they didn't understand or they thought Messiah hadn't come.

So they believed in Genesis 49. They didn't have a problem with Genesis 49. The scepter's going to go. Great. The scepter's going to go. When? When Messiah comes. The scepter had gone.

[24 : 34] No Messiah. That's what they were concerned about. Messiah had not come or so they thought. Because what else is happening spring 12 AD.

At the same time in the same city in Jerusalem there is a young boy. A descendant of the tribe of Judah. A lion cub.

Sitting in the temple. questioning being questioned by the rabbis. Messiah had come and they just hadn't known it.

Messiah the lion had come. The one who is worthy is the righteous ruler. That's what John is seeing. But the second name the elder gives the one worthy is the root of David.

Jesus was a descendant of King David but listen he also preceded King David. He's the root of David.

[25 : 44] He is royal like David but he is divine. The one who is worthy is the divine king who will reign forever and ever.

And this is who we've been waiting for. And the elder says he's here. He's come. The lion of the tribe of Judah.

The root of David. And I wonder what John expected to see as he turned to look. As the elder pronounces he's here.

The lion of the tribe of Judah. The root of David. I wonder what John expected to see as he turned. Aslan? Aragorn?

Who would this one worthy be? Verse 6 tells us in what is one of the most surprising verses in the entire Bible. The lion disappears and the third scene enters a lamb.

[26 : 50] Between the throne the four living creatures among the elders I saw a lamb standing as though it had been slain. The lamb analogy is used 28 times in the book of Revelation.

It is a familiar theme in the Bible. The set up is in Genesis 22 of course where Abraham is told by God to go and sacrifice Isaac his only son the only son whom he loves and God says to Abraham no stop Abraham says God will provide himself a lamb for the burnt offering.

Then in Exodus 12 the Passover the lamb will be without blemish. Isaiah 53 the suffering Messiah like a lamb led to the slaughter. John chapter 1 the declaration of John the Baptist here is the lamb of God what does he do?

He takes away the sins of the world he takes away the debt he's able to unseal the scroll and here in Revelation he is described as a lamb standing would you notice that?

He is a lamb standing as though it had been slain although some commentators like to associate the idea of standing with his resurrection there actually isn't reason to.

[28 : 16] This is a lamb that was slain referring to the way that they burnt the offerings in the temple. Get this picture that when they took a lamb they would take the front legs of the lamb and put a piece of wood across their front legs to bear their hearts to the flame and then another piece of wood from bottom to top in order to lower them down.

In Exodus what you see in the tabernacle and then later throughout the history of Israel are lambs laid out in the shape of a cross and then slain. So what you see in this scene is this lamb standing as though it had been slain.

That's a crucified lamb. And so on the one hand the elder has described Jesus as the lion of the tribe of Judah depicting supreme power and at the same time he is described as a crucified lamb which speaks of supreme self-sacrifice.

And in the rest of the verse we read two further descriptions of Jesus that he has seven horns and with seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Now horns represent power and strength.

There are seven of them indicating the fullness of Christ's power because seven is the number of completion. Also note a contradiction. There is a slain lamb who is all powerful.

[29 : 49] There is a slain lamb who is all powerful. Now I don't think that this is saying the same thing as the description of the lion. John isn't mixing his metaphors here.

I don't think that John is being called to note the lion and then again the power with a kind of parenthesis about the lamb. I think that rather to make a description about Jesus I think that this is a reflection of what his slainness brings.

So 1 John 1 7 says that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. what does the slainness of Jesus do?

It cleanses us from all sin. It has the kind of power that can undo all of the wrong and all of the hurt and all of the evil and all of the wrong motives.

That's what the blood of Jesus can do. That's why we talk about the power. The power of the cross, the power of the blood. There's power there.

[30 : 58] It can rewire all of the places deep down that are just short circuiting and sparking out in our lives. It can rewrite all of history.

That's why Nicodemus said, how is it I can be born again? Are you really saying that I can just start again? And Jesus says, yep. Yes, you can.

You can become a new creation. It can rewrite all of history. It can give promise for the future. It comforts those who are fearful and overcomes all of our anxieties. That's why later on in Revelation we'll read that the martyr saints in Revelation 12 have conquered him that is Satan.

How? By the blood of the lamb. It's power. Coupled with the description of having seven eyes, the seven spirits of God which talk about the fact that nothing escapes his notice or gaze.

This is saying that when Jesus shows up everything changes. Have you discovered that yet?

[32 : 07] Because everything in the universe for all time hinges on the lamb standing as though it had been slain. That's where Jesus won and that's where we win.

We and so verse seven says that he went and he took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.

The power of the slain lamb to pay the debt and set us free. He is the only one worthy where in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

So that Paul says that at the name of Jesus in Philippines too every knee should bow. Notice! Where? In heaven and on earth and under the earth.

And when he had taken the scroll the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the lamb. Verse eight each holding a harp or a guitar preferably 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 the scroll 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 priest to our God and they shall reign on the earth like there is so much theology packed into that song isn't there would you notice five things that that flow out of his worthiness number one his death they sing for you were slain it's almost too good to be true isn't it that the lion of the tribe of

[34 : 20] Judah could be slain the uncreated one the eternal one was slain the second thing his ransom by your blood you ransomed!

people for God what does that mean ransom it means that he purchased us back to him once we did not belong to him and now we do belong to him like that's just worth singing about isn't it that he ransomed us thirdly look at his redeeming scope from every tribe that word tribe is clan from every clan that's good news if you're Scottish right so like yeah yeah right so from every tribe or clan and language and people and nation with his ethnos ethnicity like there's no one left left left now right like the redeeming scope is everyone fourth thing that flows out of his worthiness is a new creation you have made them a kingdom and priest to our

God like if you ever wonder where you are in the Bible right check that out that's you you you are a kingdom and priest to our God that's what he's made us once we were enemies of God once we ran away from God once we gave things that had no worth utmost worth and now we are priests to God and then fifthly the fifth thing that flows out of his worthiness is that his blessings of his people to rule they shall reign on the earth you get to be a part of God's rule on earth and then I looked verse 11 14 and I heard around the throne I heard I saw he says and

I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels numbering now I don't I don't think for one moment John is going one two three like this is this is John's way of saying think of a number think of the highest number you can think of times it by itself and you're kind of close myriads upon myriads thousands upon 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 best blessing angels as far as the eye can see choose out of all the words that they could have chosen the word that they chose to describe

Jesus worthy and at some point in your life you're faced with that same question is Jesus worth it is he worthy you see the cost to follow Jesus is a matter of life and death Matthew 16 verse 25 said following Jesus is a matter of life and death it's not a weekend hobby so the question is who is worth the offering of your life the psalmist said in psalm 25 Lord I give you my life literally I offer you my life see when we get to heaven it's not going to be your career or your family or dreams or your aspirations on the throne it's going to be

[39 : 05] Jesus when we're standing around the throne to worship for eternity it's not going to be your career or your family or your dreams or your aspirations we're going to be worshipping it's going to be Jesus because he is the one who created you and died for you and is worthy of all of your worship your family is precious your dreams are important your career future is probably bright but Jesus and Jesus alone is worth the offering of your life Paul wrote Philippians chapter 3 he said whatever gain I did have I counted as loss for the sake of Christ indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord and for his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that

I may gain Christ Paul looked at everything in this world and he looked at Jesus and he said you are more precious to me than everything else Jesus said in Matthew chapter 10 verse 37 whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me you either treasure Jesus above all or not at all is Jesus worth it a thousand times yes he's worth it Jesus said John said I heard every creature in heaven verse 13 every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and even 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 to right and the elders fell down and worshipped let's pray father we want to confess that we have not always given you a scribe to you the worth that you have already lord we have valued other things above you above knowing you they've taken priorities over us and in our lives they've dictated our times and our passions the way that we have spent our money the way we have viewed others lord we want to thank you this morning lord that you're not only worthy intrinsically! lord but we are able to ascribe worth to you because you've paid the debt our debt you're the only one able to open those seals we thank you this morning lord that you have ransomed us to god thank you lord that you have made us a new creation thank you that our future is very bright because of you lord we want to say this morning lord that we're on your side lord we want to be worshipping around your throne lord and we want to say lord that we're sorry when we put ourselves on the throne and worshipped our own things so we pray this morning lord that there would be a change of mind and a change of heart in all of us lord to pursue those things that are

related to you and your glory lord would you fix us would you shape us by your spirit lord would you change our thinking lord would we structure our day and our time and our finances and our motivations and our priorities around giving you ascribing you worth lord we want to say this morning lord that you are worthy lord you are worthy of our lives lord we pray that you would help us each and every day to offer up our lives in spirit and in truth we ask in Jesus name amen