

Easter 3 / May 4, 2025

Revelation 5:9

*“Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain and with your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.”*

Worthy is the Lamb

Chapter five of Revelation takes place in the courts of heaven in the presence of God, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders. The heavenly Father, indescribable in appearance, is seated on His throne. He holds in His hand a scroll sealed with seven seals. John hears a loud voice call out, *“Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?”* The scroll is written on both sides, but the exact contents of the scroll and the message it contains are not explicitly stated. Doubtless, it is of paramount importance. A search is made of the heavens, the underworld and the earth, but no one is found who is worthy to open the scroll. John is so overwhelmed by the importance of the message hidden beneath the seven seals and so distraught that no one is found worthy to break its seals and reveal its contents that he begins to weep. What mystery does the scroll contain and what message is so holy that no one is found in all creation worthy to reveal it? It is the message of human salvation that no human could earn for her or himself, but which God provided by giving His Son as the Lamb who was slain for our sins. Worthy is the Lamb.

Then an angel intervenes to lift John’s despair. He says, *“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.”* The Lamb takes the scroll from God the Father’s hand. The heavenly chorus bursts into praise for Christ our Saviour saying, *“You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain and with your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.”* No one in all creation can redeem him or herself from bondage to sin and the devil. No one in all creation can ransom her or himself from the condemnation of death. No one can do this for themselves or for any other. Only Christ was able to atone for human sin, which He did through the blood of His cross. Only Christ can open the scroll, which proclaims pardon and offers peace for all to receive. Through the gospel Christ proclaims the salvation He earned and offers all to receive. He is worthy as our God and Saviour. He is worthy to receive our highest

praise and greatest thanksgiving. He was slain and with His blood He redeemed us to be people for God. Worthy is the Lamb.

It's noteworthy that John hears the heavenly chorus singing that Christ redeemed us not simply to be people of God, which of course we are in Christ Jesus. It is significant that he hears them singing that Christ ransomed us to be people for God. People actively engaged in relationship with God. People who consciously make God the heart of their lives. People who intentionally make the salvation God has prepared in Christ known to others. The most important message is the message of salvation earned by Jesus through His sinless life, perfect obedience and sacrificial death; offered for all to receive, given to all who believe. The greatest thanks we can give to God and the highest praise we can bestow upon Christ is to make His salvation known in the world; sharing it both with those who believe (because we always need to hear the message of salvation) and also with those who do not yet believe. How will they believe if they do not hear the message? Faith comes through hearing and hearing through the gospel of Jesus.

The book of Revelation reveals many things about the last times and the life of the church in those times. But the most important thing it reveals is the salvation God has prepared in Christ Jesus, which He offers all to receive through faith in His Name. Jesus is praised in our text specifically for the salvation He accomplished through the shedding of His blood to ransom us from bondage to sin and the condemnation of eternal death. Jesus is worthy to be praised by the nature of His being as the eternal Son of God. Jesus is specifically praised in terms of His role as the Lamb who provided the perfect and only necessary sacrifice for our salvation. There is a passage in the book of Hebrews that is problematic for some people and used by others to deny the full and eternal deity of Christ. The author says having been perfected, or made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him. The perfection or perfecting spoken of in Hebrews is the same which we see in Revelation. It is not the perfecting of Jesus' person. It is the perfecting of the work He came to accomplish. The ransom of humans from sin and death, so that through faith in Him, we and people from every nation would become people for God! Worthy is the Lamb.

The Lamb is worthy first because of the nature of His being as the eternally begotten of the Father. The Lamb made Himself worthy of being our Redeemer by humbling Himself to born a human being and living thirty-three years among us in the form of a servant. The Lamb made Himself worthy of being our Saviour by

overcoming the temptations of the devil and enduring the tests of life as a human being, so that He could both offer Himself to us as a sympathetic high priest and offer Himself on the cross for the atonement of our sin, the righteous for the unrighteous to bring us to God. Jesus could have become our Saviour with the wave of His hand or with a word from His mouth. He chose to earn the right to be our Saviour, by sharing in our flesh and blood, partaking in our experience of life in a world held hostage by the devil, enslaved to sin and under the condemnation of death. Jesus earned the right to be our Saviour by offering Himself as the sacrificial Lamb to take away our sin and the sin of the world. So deep is His love for us and every human soul! Worthy is the Lamb.

John dedicated this letter to Christ Jesus, saying in the preamble, *“To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father.”* Jesus expressed His love for all people by sharing in our humanity and becoming our Saviour through the shedding of His blood on the cross. Jesus expresses His love for us as believers by opening our hearts to faith through the word of salvation and the inner working of the Holy Spirit. Words can never adequately describe God’s love for the world in general and Christ’s love for believers in particular. He is worthy of our praise on so many levels, but especially and particularly, for the sacrifice of His life on the cross for our ransom from sin, the devil and the condemnation of eternal death. He loves us. He freed us from our sins; not as St. Peter said, with the precious things of this world, but with His blood; precious beyond reckoning, because it is made holy through the communion of His divinity; Most precious because it was shed in love for people of every nation, especially for believers such as you and I. Worthy is the Lamb.

Jesus is praised because He ransomed people from all the earth and throughout the world to be people for God and priests to God. This theme is found throughout the epistles, beginning earlier in the books of Moses. God creates Israel to be a nation of priests, a people for Him; serving Him by offering the sacrifices of prayer, praise and thanksgiving; making His name known in the world, so the nations will know Him as the only God and the Saviour of all who believe. In his first letter St. Peter says, *“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”* We serve as priests, not by offering sacrifices for the atonement of sin. Jesus sacrificed Himself once, forever and for all to atone for the sin of the world.

We serve as priests by offering sacrifices of praise. Saying with our words and by our actions, "Worthy is the Lamb." We serve as priests and share in His reign on earth by proclaiming Jesus, the Saviour of all people, calling them to faith, so that the Holy Spirit may open their hearts to believe in His name. Jesus loves the world so dearly He sacrificed Himself for the sins of all. The greatest thing we can do for God and the highest praise we can give to Jesus, is treasure Him in our hearts as our Saviour and tell others, believers and non-believers the good news of salvation in His Name. God the Holy Spirit bless us always with faith to believe and confess the good news of Christ the Saviour. Worthy is the Lamb. In His Name. Amen