

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

“THE WORTHY ONE” Revelation 5:1-14

In the opening chapter of his book, *Hard to Believe*, John MacArthur makes the following statement:

“The first role of successful merchandising is to give consumers what they want. If they want bigger burgers, make their burgers bigger.

Designer bottled water in six fruit flavors? Done! Minivans with ten cup holders? Give them twenty!

You’ve got to keep the customer satisfied. You’ve got to modify your product and your message to meet their needs if you want to build a market and get ahead of the competition.”

This is certainly true in the business world. Unfortunately the same consumer mentality has invaded the Christian church.

Rather than worshipping in spirit and truth as Jesus urges in John 4:24, churches everywhere are seeking to make their worship services more palatable for the unbelieving world.

They are seeking to be less confrontational; less judgmental; less scary; and less offensive.

Let me give you a few examples:

A few years ago when, Kim and I were up north in Eureka, CA, I found this newspaper ad for a new church.

It is called the Fresh Air Church. The ad says,

“Are you looking for a church where you can breathe? No scented products, pollens or toxins! Fresh Air Church is for anyone, but those wearing scented products cannot attend.

Just a couple of years ago the Los Angeles Times Magazine reported on one Lutheran church in Southern California that distributed flyers advertising their church service as “God’s Country Goodtime Hour.”

The flyer promised line dancing following the worship service and members listened to sermons entitled, “The Pastor’s 1970 Ford Pickup.”

A third illustration comes from the heart of the Bible Belt. An ad for the church’s service read this way:

“See Barnum and Bailey bested as the magic of the big top circus comes to The Fellowship of Excitement! Clowns! Acrobats! Animals! And Popcorn!”

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This same church once had their pastoral staff put on a wrestling match during a Sunday service. They went so far as to have a professional trainer teach pastors how to throw one another around the ring, pull hair, and kick shins without hurting one another.

Unfortunately these are not extremes as many churches have moved away from focus on worship to a focus on entertainment.

This is not the example we are provided in the scriptures. Rather we are given an example of what true worship looks like.

Turn in your Bibles to **Revelation 5:1-14**.

We will look at a passage that demonstrates the heart of true worship; a passage that describes a future worship service in heaven.

Now, Revelation 5 is a continuation of the worship scene in heaven that we were introduced to in Revelation 4.

Remember that the Apostle John was granted the immeasurable privilege of having a glimpse of heaven and he recorded what he saw.

Remember that the focus of his attention in Revelation 4 was on the heavenly throne room and in particular the One who sat on the throne.

Now in Revelation 5, John shifts his attention to the activity that is taking place in the heavenly throne room. In so doing, he highlights three particular activities.

What activities do we see taking place in heaven as this worship scene continues?

First, we see the search for the worthy one (Revelation 5:1-4). READ!

As we examine these verses, there are three questions answered in relation to this search:

1-Why is this search conducted? (In verses 1-2)

John tells us that a worthy one is needed to open a book with seven seals.

Now, this was likely more of a scroll than a book as we know it today.

Scrolls were usually made up of a long piece of the Egyptian plant called papyrus or treated animal skin called parchment.

These scrolls were generally about 15 feet long and rolled up with writing on both sides.

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It was common in the first century for a person in authority to seal an important document so that its contents would remain a secret. Roman law required a last will and testament to be sealed seven times.

Such documents were usually sealed with wax or clay and could only be opened by a qualified person.

All kinds of transactions were consummated this way, including marriage contracts, lease agreements, release of slaves, contract-bills and others.

Ezekiel gives us a description of this scroll in Ezekiel 2:9-10. He says, “9 Then I looked, and behold, a hand was extended to me; and lo, a scroll was in it. 10 When He spread it out before me, it was written on the front and back, and written on it were lamentations, mourning and woe.”

The lamentations, mourning and woe that Ezekiel is referencing are the judgments of God to be poured out on the earth during the tribulation period. And this is exactly what we will see unfold in Revelation 6-18.

It is at this point that John sees a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the book and break its seals?” (Revelation 5:2)

It is important to note that the text does not identify this angel.

Thus, it is not profitable for us to speculate as to the identity of this angel. We aren’t given any further information.

This angel proclaims with a loud voice. The loud sound of the angel’s voice, vibrating throughout heaven, denotes the urgency, and importance of what he is about to announce.

John MacArthur paraphrases the angel’s question in his commentary on the book of Revelation.

MacArthur says what the angel is asking is, “Who has the innate, virtuous worthiness of character and the divine right that would qualify him to break the seven seals and open the book?”

In order for the scroll to be opened and the judgment to be poured out “a worthy one” needed to be found to break the seals and open the book.

2-What is the problem that is presented? (In verse 3)

A problem ensued as no created being was found, who was worthy to break the seals and open the book.

A search of the entire universe revealed that no one was able to open the book.

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No one in heaven, no one on earth, no one under the earth was found worthy to open the scroll. These three phrases together is a common ancient expression denoting the entire universe.

It is taken together to emphasize that no one from heaven to hell or any place in between was worthy to open the scroll/book. And that was certainly a problem.

There was none of God's creation (angel or man alike), which was worthy of character or had the divine right to break those seals and look into the contents of the scroll.

3-What was John's reaction? (Verse 4)

It is recorded in Revelation 5:4 that John responds to this news by weeping greatly.

The word, "weep" [KLAIO] is the same word used of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem in Luke 19:41 and of Peter's bitter weeping after betraying the Lord in Luke 22:62.

It gives us the picture of a continual, unrestrained and uncontrollable wailing. It expresses John's genuine sorrow over man's moral inability because no one was found worthy.

As it turns out John's extreme sorrow and uncontrollable wailing was a bit premature. Why? Because the search was over!

Second, we see the selection of the worthy one (Revelation 5:5-7). READ!

Who was selected as the one who was worthy to open the book and break the seven seals?

See, no one in the created universe could open the scroll, but there was one, who was not created, but having existed from all eternity, He was worthy to open the scroll.

John is told to stop weeping as the worthy one emerges on the scene. This worthy one is described by three different titles.

1-The Worthy One is described as a Lion.

Not just any lion, but as the Lion from the tribe of Judah.

This takes us back to Genesis 49:8-10 where Jacob blesses his son Judah. The tribe of Judah is described as a lion-like tribe.

To Judah would belong national prominence and kingship including David, Solomon and their dynasty; but also through Judah would come the Messiah.

Jesus was descended from the tribe of Judah according to Matthew 1:2 and Hebrews 7:14. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He is the one who is worthy to open the book and break the seals.

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2-The Worthy One is described as a Root.

He is specifically described as the root of David. This is a second messianic title ascribed to the worthy one.

It finds its source in Isaiah 11:1-10, *“Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit...”*

In other words, the Worthy One (Messiah) would be a descendant of David.

The genealogies of Matthew 1 and Luke 3 both reveal that Jesus is a descendant of David both through the physical line of His mother, Mary; and through the legal line of His earthly father, Joseph.

Paul also affirms in Romans 1:3 that Jesus was born a descendant of David. In fact the term “Son of David” was frequently used to refer to Jesus.

Jesus is the root of David; Jesus is the Worthy One.

3-The Worthy One is described as a Lamb.

The third identification of the worthy one is given by John as he looks and sees a lamb standing before the throne.

This lamb is once again a reference to Jesus. The New Testament recognized Jesus, the Christ as the ultimate sacrificial lamb:

John the Baptist refers to Jesus in John 1:29, *“as the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world...”*

Philip teaches the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8, that the passage from Isaiah 53:8, *“He was led as a sheep to slaughter...”* refers to Jesus.

Peter in 1 Peter 1:19 refers to the blood of Christ as of a lamb unblemished and spotless...

In fact, the book of Revelation refers to Jesus as a lamb some 31 times.

Very clearly the identity of the Worthy One is none other than Jesus, the Christ.

John goes on to give a description of the lamb he sees standing before the throne.

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- *John describes the lamb as slain.*

There were scars from this lamb's slaughter that were clearly visible, yet he was not dead.

This certainly pictures the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross of Calvary. After his resurrection from the dead, Jesus still possessed the scars from His crucifixion (cf. John 20:27-29).

- *John also describes the Lamb as having seven horns and seven eyes.*

The seven horns represent imagery from the animal world that is often used to symbolize strength and power.

So in all likelihood, the seven horns represent the omnipotence of Christ.

The seven eyes described here are called the seven spirits of God. This is a reference to the fullness of the Holy Spirit and thus highlights the omniscience of Christ.

Christ the Lamb is the Worthy One. He is the One, who has both the character and divine right to open the book and break its seals.

As the Worthy One, He came and took the book from God on the throne in order to break the seals and unleash God's Holy wrath upon the unbelieving world.

But, before He actually breaks the seals, we hear of another activity in heaven.

Third, we hear the songs to the worthy one (Revelation 5:8-14). READ!

It is at this point, when the lamb takes the book that worship resumes in heaven.

While this is a continuation of the worship in Revelation 4, it introduces three new songs of praise now offered up to the Worthy One. So let's take a quick look at these hymns of praise.

Hymn #1—A Hymn of Redemption.

Remember that as Revelation 4 and 5 unfold there is an increasing crescendo of praise along with an increasing number of worshippers.

In Revelation 4:8, just the four living creatures worshipped.

In Revelation 4:11, the four living creatures and the 24 elders worshipped.

Now here in Revelation 5:9-10, we still have the four living creatures and the 24 elders worshipping, but the elders have also added harps to their worship.

Harps were often used in the Old Testament to offer up praise and adoration to God.

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Notice that they also have golden bowls of incense, which we are told represent the prayers of the saints.

This adds to the picture of worship here. Not only is there singing, but there is the incorporation of musical instruments and the offering up of prayer in the worship of God.

We are also told that they sang a new song. What did they sing? They sang a song of redemption. They sang praise to the Worthy One because of what He had accomplished. They declare that the Lamb is worthy to take the book and break its seals. Why?

He is proclaimed worthy to open the scroll because of His great sacrifice. He was slain.

His being slain speaks of the substitutionary and sacrificial death of Christ on the cross.

Christ's death paid the ransom price to purchase men from every tribe, tongue, people and nation.

The term purchased [AGORAZO], is a rich New Testament word for redemption that pictures slaves purchased in the market place and then set free.

At the cross, The Lord Jesus paid the purchase price (through His death) to redeem men from every descent, language, race and culture from the slave market of sin.

This is what makes Him the Worthy One. This is why He is the one who is worthy to break the seals and open the book.

It is because of His sacrificial work on the cross on our behalf for our benefit that He is considered worthy to break the seals and open the book.

We're not worthy. There is not one good thing about us.

Paul says in Romans 3:10-11 that, "*There is none righteous, not even one...*"

Paul also says in Ephesians 2:1 that we are dead in our trespasses and sins...So, there is a penalty to be paid.

So what is the penalty? Death! Paul says in Romans 6:23 that the wages of sin is death. We are all doomed in and of ourselves.

But thanks to the Worthy One, who paid that penalty for us as Paul says in Romans 5:8, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

He took our place. He paid the price for our sins. He died on the cross for us. He is worthy! Worthy to open the scroll! Worthy of all our praise for all eternity!

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All we have to do is believe!!!

It is because of Christ's work on the cross that we have been made to be a kingdom of priests to our God.

All who believe in Christ as their Lord and Savior will live in the sphere of God's rule.

-Believers will be a kingdom entered by faith in Jesus Christ. -Believers will be as priests, and have the right to enter into God's presence.

-Believers will reign with God upon the earth during the Millennial Kingdom spoken of in Revelation 20.

What Grace! What Love! What Sacrifice! What Blessings! What a motivation to Worship!

Who doesn't want to sing about that????

Hymn #2—A Hymn of Worthiness.

It is at this point that the angels join in the worship. The angels, the four living beings, and the elders (the church) are all involved in the worship from this point forward.

The number of those worshipping at this point is incalculable John uses the phrase, "myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands."

The Greek expression can be translated "innumerable."

Can you imagine the scene? Remember that visually there is a great deal of light, reflection and flashing taking place and now added to the visual is the loud worship of an innumerable number of worshippers.

This second hymn of worship emphasizes the worthiness of the Lamb. It highlights seven qualities intrinsic to God that demand our praise.

He is worthy to receive power, riches, wisdom, might, honor, glory, and blessing.

The scriptures clearly ascribe these qualities to God.

Although He already possesses these qualities, He is proclaimed to be worthy of receiving them.

But the worship doesn't end here. John goes on to describe:

Hymn #3—A Hymn of Blessing.

As this future worship service in heaven reaches a crescendo, every created thing, which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them join in.

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This all-inclusive statement is reminiscent of Psalm 69:34, which says, “*Let heaven and earth praise Him, The seas and everything that moves in them.*”

It is also harkens back to Psalm 150:6, which says, “*Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!*”

This mighty chorus cries out, “To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, be blessing, and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.”

Essentially the chorus is singing, “Let endless blessing, endless honor, endless praise, endless glory and endless worship belong to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

It is at this point that the four living beings continually repeat the word “Amen” and the elders fall down again in reverent worship.

This is true worship! This is what we should be preparing ourselves for. Believers will be there! But we don’t have to wait until that moment to participate in true worship.

How about your life? What do you focus on? Everybody focuses on something (work, family, TV, cars, homes, hobbies...).

Let me ask you a few questions:

- Is God your continual focus?
- Do you sacrifice your time, energy/effort to worship Him?
- Do you seek to exalt His great name because of what He has done?
- Do you seek to offer up praise and honor and glory to Him because He is worthy?
- Do you have a heart for worship?
- Is worship, your way of life?

Now, I promise you one thing. We will maintain our focus here at Valley Bible Church on the true worship of God.

We will not create a circus type atmosphere with clowns and acrobats!

We will not line dance during the service!

I will not preach a sermon entitled, “My 1997 Dodge Ram.”

Next week however, Gerry and Dale will face off in the first annual Valley Bible pastoral wrestling match.

No! We will not even seek to entertain you through pastoral wrestling.

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Our focus on Sunday mornings is to come and Worship in Spirit and in Truth!

My hope is that each one of us will be motivated to humble ourselves before God and exalt Him as the only one who is worthy to be praised.