

# Blessing, Glory, and Honor Forever

Revelation 5:6-14  
SS Lesson for 04/29/2018

**Devotional Scripture:** Phil 2:5-11

## OUTLINE

### INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW AND KEY VERSE OF THE LESSON

*Key Verse: Rev 5:12*

*Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary*

*Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary*

LESSON INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

*From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary*

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THE LAMB APPEARS (REV 5:6-7)

*With the authority of God (6-7)*

Jesus has authority because He defeated death (2 Tim 1:10)

Jesus has authority because God gave it to Him (Matt 28:18)

Jesus has authority because He will gather His Church (1 Thess 4:16-17)

Jesus has authority because He brings salvation (Heb 9:28)

Jesus has authority because He is the creator (Col 1:16)

Jesus has authority because He is the Word (John 1:1-3)

Jesus has authority because through Him all things consist (1 Cor 8:6)

Jesus has authority because He can forgive sins (Matt 9:6)

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Worshipped by all living creatures around the heavenly throne (Rev 4:8-11)

Worshipped by a multitude too great to count from every nation, tribe, people and language (Rev 7:9-10)

Worshipped by the thousands in the chariots of God (Ps 68:17)

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Worshipped by the creation through their rejoicing (1 Chron 16:31)

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## Introduction

### Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson reviews the implications of the heavenly worship of the Lamb as they sang **Blessing, Glory, and Honor Forever**. The **study's aim** is to better see how we can be living in and for Jesus Christ. The **study's application** is to make it a daily practice to honor and praise God and the Lamb of God above all else.

*(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)*

### Key Verse: Rev 5:12

*Saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"*

### Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

**5:1.** All of chapter 4 is an introduction to the main point of chapters 4-5, that is, to introduce the **scroll** with its **seven seals**. The symbolic presentation showed a scroll or a rolled-up parchment with seven seals affixed to the side in such a way that if unrolled the seven seals would need to be broken one by one.

**5:2-5.** John **saw a mighty angel** (cf. 10:1; 18:21) and heard him ask **in a loud voice, Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?** This is the first of 20 times "loud voice" occurs in Revelation. The last is in 21:3. The Greek word rendered "scroll" is *biblion*, from which is derived the word "Bible." When **no one** was found to be worthy, John **wept and wept** (lit., "kept on shedding many tears"). **One** of the **24 elders**, however, told him not to weep, and introduced him to **the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David** (cf. Isa. 11:1; Rev. 22:16). The elder informed John that He had **triumphed**, that is, had already achieved victory, and that He alone was **able to break the seals and open the scroll**.

**5:6-7.** Though introduced as a "Lion" (v. 5), what John **saw** was a **Lamb** that appeared to have been **slain** or sacrificed. Yet the Lamb was **standing in the center of the throne**. About Him were the **24 elders** and **the four living creatures**. The Lamb **had seven horns and seven eyes**. The Lion and the Lamb surely refer to Christ, with the Lamb referring to His first coming and His death and the Lion referring to His second coming and His sovereign judgment of the world. This is the only place in Revelation where Christ is called a Lion, whereas the word "Lamb" (*arnion*, "a small or young lamb") is found 27 times in Revelation and nowhere else in the New Testament. But two similar words for a sacrificial lamb are used in the New Testament: *arēn*, found only in Luke 10:3, and *amnos*, which occurs four times (John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32; 1 Peter 1:19). Since horns symbolize strength (1 Kings 22:11), the "seven horns" represent the authority and strength of a ruler (Dan. 7:24; Rev. 13:1). The "seven eyes" defined as **the seven spirits of God** (cf. Zech. 3:9; 4:10) symbolically represent the Holy Spirit (cf. Rev. 1:4, 4:5). Because He alone is worthy, the Lamb **took the scroll from the right hand of Him who sat on the throne** (cf. Dan. 7:9, 13-14).

**5:8.** When the scroll was **taken** by the Lamb, **the 24 elders fell down before the Lamb** in worship. Each elder **had a harp and golden bowls full of incense**, which was interpreted as **the prayers of the saints** (cf. Ps. 141:2). While the angels presented the prayers, they were not priests or mediators. Only the harp (lyre) and the trumpet are mentioned as musical instruments in heavenly worship in the Book of Revelation.

**5:9-10.** In a **new song** the 4 creatures and 24 elders ascribed worthiness to the Lamb **to take the scroll and break the seals**, stating that the Lamb had been **slain** and had **purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation**. Those He purchased with His **blood** were made a **kingdom and priests to serve our God** (cf. 1:6), and to **reign on the earth**. "Purchased" is from the verb *agorazō*, "to redeem." A textual problem exists in these verses. The Greek text used by the KJV indicates that the new song is sung by those who themselves have been redeemed: "Thou... has redeemed *us* to God... and hast

made *us* unto our God kings and priests, and *we* shall reign on the earth.” The NIV, however, reads, “You purchased *men* for God.... You have made *them* to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and *they* will reign on the earth.” If the KJV is correct, the 24 elders must represent the church or saints in general. If their song is impersonal as in the NIV and they simply are singing that Christ is the Redeemer of all men, it opens the possibility that the 24 elders could be angels, though it does not expressly affirm it. While scholars differ on this point, it would seem that since the elders are on thrones and are crowned as victors, they represent the church rather than angels. Angels have not been judged and rewarded at this point in the program of God. But angels soon join the creatures and the elders in praising the Lamb (5:11-12). The two different interpretations here should not mar the beauty of the picture and the wonder of this song of praise.

**5:11-12.** The elders were joined by the hosts of **angels** in heaven who added their words of praise **in a loud voice**. The words **they sang** are literally “they said” (*legontes*). This is in contrast to verse 9 where the 24 elders “sang” (*adousin*). In the angels’ praise they ascribed **power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise** to God.

**5:13-14.** Every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea and all that is in **them** joined the heavenly throng in words of praise to God. In this final act of praise **the four... creatures said Amen**, and the 24 **elders fell** prostrate in worship. With the heavenly vision of chapters 4-5, the stage was set for the dramatic events to follow, the opening of the seven seals. It is clear from this revelation that heaven is real, not imagined. These two chapters reveal the indescribable glory and infinite majesty of the Godhead in heaven. The following chapters reveal this sovereign power of God expressed in judgment on a wicked world sunk in unprecedented depths of sin and blasphemy. Though believers today do not have the privilege of sharing John’s vision or a similar one granted to Paul (2 Cor. 12:1-3), every believer can take the word pictures of Scripture here and anticipate the glory and the wonder of the heavenly scene that he will someday see with his own eyes.

#### **Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary**

At first glance the text for this week is very similar to last week's text. It might be wondered what more could be added to what was already said there. But there are some key differences. Anyone who has heard these words in a majestic performance of Handel's oratorio Messiah has gained perhaps a faint glimmer of what this scene will be like in its awesome reality. It is the pinnacle of worship and what our hearts long for as we offer imperfect and halting praise here on earth. There has been a definite progression since the utterance of praise in last week's text. There we saw twenty-four elders and four living creatures offering praise to the One who was seated on the heavenly throne. As the scene continued to unfold before John (chap. 5), he saw a Lamb standing in the midst of these figures (vs. 6). The Lamb had the appearance of having been slain but now was very much alive. The identity of this Lamb was so perfectly obvious that John needed no identification, especially after an elder had spoken of "the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David" (vs. 5). After taking a mysterious but clearly important scroll, the Lamb became the object of a cascade of praise. Now the elders and living creatures were joined by a vast company of angels: "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" (vs. 11). Even before their words were uttered, it was plain that all attention was focused on a Person of unparalleled importance and preeminence. The vast host began to proclaim or sing a chorus of praise: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." The same "worthy" that was directed to the Lord God on the throne (4:11) was now applied to the Lamb—Jesus. It is an equation that might seem blasphemous if the Lamb were anything less than divine Himself. Just as God was earlier said to be worthy to "receive" things that He already possessed in infinite measure, so now the Lamb is proclaimed worthy to receive these same things and even more. It is perhaps instructive to see in the carefully chosen words of our text the final vindication of Jesus over the unbelief, scorn, and contempt that He endured from the world. The fact that He was slain was seen by many as proof of unworthiness; in fact, it was the basis for His victory. As He walked this earth, Jesus was subject to the power of ungodly men and institutions. Yet He will be acknowledged as worthy of all power. In terms of material goods, Jesus was poor on earth; by contrast, He is eternally worthy of all riches. Many contemporaries dismissed Jesus' teachings as the words of a madman; in reality, He has all wisdom. Jesus lived in the weakness of human flesh and allowed His enemies to abuse Him. Yet He has all strength. He was dishonored but will receive all honor. He bore the shame of the cross but will wear the robe of everlasting glory. He endured the curses of many and accepted the ultimate curse of being hanged on a tree, but His eternal existence is one of pure blessing. And thankfully, it is a blessing He shares with all of us! Worthy is He indeed!

## **Lesson Introduction and Background**

### **From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

Many religious beliefs feature a strong sense of destiny, of divine control over the lives of humans. In the Greek mythological world of Mount Olympus, familiar to the first readers of Revelation, this was personified by the three goddesses of fate: one who spins the thread of life, one who allots the number of life's days, and one who cuts the thread of life at the time of death. The Greeks and Romans also believed in Fortuna, the goddess who determined a person's destiny, whether prosperous or disastrous. The Bible presents God as sovereign; he declares, "My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please" (Isaiah 46:10). God's plans are not to be thwarted, for he has the power to carry out his will in all things (Proverbs 19:21). Yet God allows humans to devise and carry out their own plans for life, reserving for himself the final say on the outcomes (Proverbs 16:9). Unlike the capricious and unpredictable actions of the goddesses of fate or Fortuna, the Lord's will works with human wills for God's desired outcomes. These outcomes are always and utterly consistent with God's unchanging nature. Today's lesson considers the ultimate outcome that God ensures will happen. In chapters 4 and 5 of Revelation, John sees the Lord seated on his heavenly throne. In God's hand is a scroll sealed with seven seals; the opening of this scroll reveals the future, the events that "must take place after this" (Revelation 4:1, last week's lesson).

Revelation 4 begins John's vision of the throne room of Heaven. John describes its majestic features and residents, including the living creatures who lead worship and the elders who bow in worship. The chapter ends with a song praising the worthiness of the Lord God to receive worship. This is based on God's being the one who creates and sustains all things. Chapter 5 begins with John's observation of a new detail: in the hand of the one seated on the throne (God) is an unusual scroll, unusual for two reasons. First, it has writing on both sides, which is not the standard practice. The scroll is likely made of treated animal skins. With such scrolls it was much easier to write on the "flesh" side than the "hair" side. Writing on both sides gives the impression of the scroll overflowing with important information. Second, the scroll has seven seals instead of the usual one seal. These are wax seals affixed by God himself. They can be broken only by one who has proper authority. Consequently, a search throughout Heaven attempts to find one worthy to open this scroll. Initially, no one with suitable authority is found. This disappoints John, and we are told that his disappointment moves him to tears (Revelation 5:4). John wants, even needs, to know what the words of the scroll reveal. He understands that this is why he has been granted access to Heaven, for the scroll will reveal what will take place on earth (4:1). Something seems wrong, even in Heaven, and John's sadness overwhelms him. But all is not lost. One of the elders from the group near the throne tells John not to weep. The one who can break the seals, open the scroll, and reveal its secrets is arriving. This is the conquering Lion of Judah (Revelation 5:5), Jesus, but he is also the Lamb; and his appearance begins our lesson for this week.

## **Major Theme Analysis**

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

*(The Scriptural references and commentary was copied from a previous SS Lesson dated 03/23/14)*

### **The Lamb Appears (Rev 5:6-7)**

6 And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

7 Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

### **With the authority of God (6-7)**

*Jesus has authority because He defeated death (2 Tim 1:10)*

10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

*Jesus has authority because God gave it to Him (Matt 28:18)*

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

*Jesus has authority because He will gather His Church (1 Thess 4:16-17)*

16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

*Jesus has authority because He brings salvation (Heb 9:28)*

28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

*Jesus has authority because He is the creator (Col 1:16)*

16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

*Jesus has authority because He is the Word (John 1:1-3)*

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

*Jesus has authority because through Him all things consist (1 Cor 8:6)*

6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

*Jesus has authority because He can forgive sins (Matt 9:6)*

6 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. . . ." Then he said to the paralytic, "Get up, take your mat and go home."

*Jesus has authority because He is Lord of the Sabbath (Matt 12:8)*

8 For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

### ***The Lamb Is Worshipped (Rev 5:8-14)***

8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,

12 saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

13 And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"

14 Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

### **Worshipped by creatures and elders (8-10)**

*Worshipped because Jesus has been entrusted as the Judge (John 5:22-23)*

22 Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, 23 that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.

*Worshipped because everyone will eventually honor Jesus (Rom 14:11)*

11 It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'"

*Worshipped because even God exalts Jesus (Phil 2:9)*

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

*Worshipped by all living creatures around the heavenly throne (Rev 4:8-11)*

8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." 9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives forever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: 11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

*Worshipped by a multitude too great to count from every nation, tribe, people and language (Rev 7:9-10)*

9 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

*Worshipped by the thousands in the chariots of God (Ps 68:17)*

17 The chariots of God are tens of thousands and thousands of thousands; the Lord [has come] from Sinai into his sanctuary.

*Worshipped by the multitudes in heaven (Neh 9:6)*

6 You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.

*Worshipped by the saints through prayers (Ps 141:2)*

2 May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.

## **Worshipped by angels (11-12)**

*Worshipped by the angels who are on the right and left of God (1 Kings 22:19)*

19 Micaiah continued, "Therefore hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left.

*Worshipped by the angels who do God's bidding and obey His word (Ps 103:20)*

20 Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word.

*Worshipped by the angels who fall on their faces to worship (Rev 7:11)*

11 All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

*Worshipped by the angels who shout for joy (Job 38:7)*

7 while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?

*Worshipped by the angels in the assembly of God (Heb 12:22)*

22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly,

*Worshipped by the angels because the angels minister to Jesus (Heb 1:6-7)*

6 And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." 7 In speaking of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire."

*Worshipped by the angels because the angels are in submission to Jesus (1 Pet 3:22)*

22 who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand — with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

*Worshipped by the angels because the angels are to serve Jesus and those who inherit salvation (Heb 1:14)*

14 Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

### **Worshipped by everything in creation (13-14)**

*Worshipped by the creation through their proclaiming God's work (Ps 19:1-4)*

1 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. 2 Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. 3 There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. 4 Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.

*Worshipped by the creation through their rejoicing (1 Chron 16:31)*

31 Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let them say among the nations, "The Lord reigns!"

*Worshipped by the creation through their praise (Ps 89:5)*

5 The heavens praise your wonders, O Lord, your faithfulness too, in the assembly of the holy ones.

*Worshipped by the creation through their proclaiming God's righteousness (Ps 97:6)*

6 The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all the peoples see his glory.

*Worshipped by the creation through their praising of God's Name (Ps 148:3-5)*

3 Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars. 4 Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies. 5 Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created.

*Worshipped by the creation through their singing and shouting of joy (Isa 49:13)*

13 Shout for joy, O heavens; rejoice, O earth; burst into song, O mountains! For the Lord comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.

## **Conclusion and Other Thoughts**

### **Concluding Thoughts from J. Hampton Keathley III**

#### **The Solution: The Sovereign Savior (5:5-7)**

John is commanded to stop his weeping because his eyes (and ours) are turned to that One who turns tears of sorrow into tears of joy, and weeping into laughter. Note the following chart which contrasts the two pictures here given of Christ.

Jesus as the Lion	Jesus as the Lamb
the lion character refers to His second coming	the lamb character refers to His first coming
the lion speaks of His majesty	the lamb speaks of His meekness
as lion He is sovereign	as lamb He is Savior
as lion He is Judge	as lamb He is judged
the lion speaks of the government of God	the lamb speaks of the grace of God

### *As to His Person*

(1) He is “The Lion of the tribe of Judah.” The lion is the king of beasts, and Judah is the royal tribe. Here we have an allusion to Genesis 49:9-10 where it is predicted that the future Ruler of Israel and of the earth would come out of the tribe of Judah, the royal tribe. This is, of course, a reference to the Lord Jesus who was of the line of David, a legal descendent by adoption through Joseph (Matt. 1), but also a physical descendent of David through Mary (Luke 3:23f).

(2) He is “the Root of David.” This is a reference to Isaiah 11:1 where it is prophesied that from Jesse, David’s father, the future Ruler of the earth, the Messiah, would rise up like a shoot or stem from the root of a cut down tree. The Davidic line would be cut down so that no man would sit on the throne of David (cf. Jer. 22:24-30), but from David’s line or roots would come the Messiah, David’s own progeny.

### *As to His Work*

(1) He “has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.” “Overcome” is the Greek verb *nikaw* which means “to win a victory, come off victorious, to conquer, be victorious over one’s enemies.” The tense is aorist. It is what grammarians call a culminative aorist which views an event or series of events from the standpoint of an accomplished act. It is used of verbs which signify an effort, or process, and the aorist denotes the attainment of the effort as an accomplished fact.

The Lord Jesus faced many battles like that of His temptation, of His ministry, and of course of the cross. In all of these He came forth victorious. The aorist emphasizes the complete success of Christ’s work in His ministry on earth, particularly the cross. This should remind us of His victorious shout just before He bowed His head and voluntarily died for the sin of the world. He cried out, “It is finished” (John 19:30).

“So as to open” is an aorist infinitive which points us to the intended results of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus in the plan of God. The results of Christ’s redemptive victory is the capacity and authority to break the seals and to pour out the judgments.

“To open the book” refers to Christ’s authority and right to reveal the prophecies of this book, first to John and then to the church.

“To open the seals” refers to His authority to break the seals and unleash their judgments here revealed when the time comes for the Tribulation.

Verse 6: So what else does John see?

(2) “A Lamb standing as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes ...” Each part of this symbolism describes certain aspects of Christ’s person and work.

“A Lamb.” Since the one standing is “*the* Lamb of God,” we might have expected to find the Greek article with the noun, but it is absent. Why? Because the absence of the article draws our attention to the quality or character of Christ as God’s sacrificial Lamb. Further, the term used here is the Greek *arnion*. The regular word for lamb is *arnon*. *Arnion* is the diminutive form and means “little Lamb,” but it came to be used as a term of endearment. The sacrificial lambs were not just lambs taken out of the flock, but those which had often been brought into the home, cared for and loved. It expresses God’s love for His Son and what it cost Him to give Him for us.

The term lion is used of Christ only once in Revelation, though this is the book which reveals Christ’s lion-like majestic authority and character. Yet the term “Lamb” (*arnion*) occurs in Revelation 28 times. The point is simply that His kingly crown, rule, and power lies in His Person and redemptive work as the Lamb of God who died in our place. The biggest battle was won on the cross. He could not take His place as Ruler until He had become the Kinsman Redeemer by the sacrifice of Himself as God’s *arnion*. The figure of the Lamb perfectly expresses the submission and controlled gentleness (meekness) of Christ as silent before His shearers and as He was led to the cross to bear our sin. This is clearly a prominent emphasis in this chapter and declared to be one of the reasons for His worthiness to open the book and its seals (cf. 5:9-10).

“Looking as if it had been slain” (NIV), or “standing as if slain” (NASB), or better, *a lamb that appeared to have been slaughtered*.

“Standing” is a perfect tense of the verb, *ἵστημι*, “to stand.” He had been slain, but now He is seen, not dead, but very much alive, indeed standing, firmly positioned, immovable and ready to judge. The perfect tense stresses this firm position.

“As if slain” or literally, “as slaughtered.” This verb, *σφάζω*, means “to slay, slaughter” and was used especially of victims for sacrifice. The obvious reference is to the Lord Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Again the Greek text employs the perfect tense which stresses completed action with results going on in the present. The continuing results were not continued death, but the efficacious effects of Christ’s substitutionary work for sin and His defeat of Satan’s power (Col. 1:12-13; 2:14-15; Heb. 2:14). The position of standing points to Him as the resurrected and victorious Savior. The marks are nevertheless there, the marks of death on His resurrected body, undoubtedly everlasting symbols of His sacrifice for us (cf. John 20:24-29).

“He had seven horns.” The horn is the symbol of power and of government, and seven (the number of perfection) shows us that Christ’s power and government are perfect. He will be victorious over all His enemies and rule in perfect righteousness and justice as prophesied in Isaiah 11.

“And seven eyes.” Eyes are symbolic of Christ’s omniscience, wisdom and insight. Again, seven emphasizes the totality and perfection of His knowledge and insight. In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3).

“Which are the seven Spirits of God.” Though Christ Himself is omniscient, He also is the One who sends forth the Holy Spirit into the earth, who likewise knows all and sees all. None of His actions and decisions in His righteous judgments against the sin of mankind will be made on partial knowledge.

(3) “And He came and He took it out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.” What a beautiful scene. The only one qualified is now seen moving to take the book out of the hand of the One on the throne. With the taking up of the scroll, action is now ready to begin. Once more we must notice what Christ is doing. He is not sitting in heaven at God’s right hand, making intercession. Instead, He moves forward to take the seven-sealed book containing the judgments of the Tribulation. This portrays His determination to establish the visible kingdom on earth when the time is right in the future. He is seen standing and walking between the throne and the 24 elders, the glorified, resurrected church there in heaven with Him. Walvoord writes:

In the act of receiving the book from God the Father, it is made evident that judgment and power over the earth are committed to Christ the Son of God. Daniel 7:13-14 is a parallel passage. There Daniel reveals the ultimate triumph of Christ when the kingdoms of the world are given to Christ. Daniel declares,

“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed.”

In that future day complete authority over the world will be realized by Christ, an authority which He will exercise both in the judgments which precede His second coming and in His reign for one thousand years which will follow His second advent.

### **The Singers (5:8-10)**

Now the solution to man’s dilemma has been found in the Lion who was also a Lamb. This recipient of the scroll is worshipped, first by the four living beings and then by the twenty-four elders (5:8-10). Following this, these two groups are joined by an innumerable host of angels, and finally by all creation in recognition of the worthiness of the Lamb and in praise of His accomplishments (5:11-14).

We must not pass on to this scene without understanding the nature or the reason for what is taking place here. Remember, this chapter is a prologue to the terrible events of the great Tribulation by which all the enemies of Christ and of God’s purposes for Him are defeated and made the footstool of His feet. It is then that Christ will begin to reign as the God-man, but also as the King of kings in fulfillment of all Old and New Testament expectations. But when do the events of this chapter occur? I believe they will occur sometime after the rapture, with the church in heaven, but just before Daniel’s Seventieth Week or the time of Jacob’s distress.

So let’s review for a moment to get the perspective so that we can properly gain the impact of this scene.

- (1) This section (chapters four and five) began with meta tauta, “after these things.” They deal with events which must take place after these things, or after the church age (4:1).
- (2) The elders who represent the church are seen in heaven, glorified, robed and crowned.
- (3) Also around the throne in heaven is a sea of crystal portraying not only God’s perfect holiness but the Old Testament laver which is now like crystal, and a symbol that there is no more need for daily cleansing of sin due to the finished work of Christ.
- (4) There is also seen a new throne set in heaven, a throne of judgment for coming events rather than a throne of intercession. In this regard Christ is seen not sitting as our advocate and intercessor, but standing and moving to take the book or scroll full of judgments. The picture of Christ here with the titles given to Him (5:5) show that He has laid aside His role as intercessor and advocate for the church (who is now with Him in heaven) and is taking up a new work on behalf of Israel, to fulfill Israel’s kingdom promises.

Let’s also look back into some other New Testament verses to properly get the picture here.

- (1) After Christ died on the cross for our sins and was raised from the dead, He was taken into heaven where He sat down at God’s right hand as our advocate and intercessor (Heb. 1:3; Rom. 8:34).
- (2) Here Christ was to sit and serve as our intercessor until it was time for what we can call “operation footstool,” the time when Christ will move to defeat all His enemies and have all things brought into subjection to Him (Heb. 1:13; 10:12-14).
- (3) Because of His humble submission to the Father’s plan to become man and die on the cross for man’s sin (i.e., His humiliation), God has highly exalted Him above all, giving Him a Name above all names with the purpose that all creation would one day worship at His feet and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God (Phil. 2:9-11).
- (4) Now, we do not see all things subjected to Him. Instead, Satan, the usurper, is still walking about, the nations are still in an uproar (Ps. 2), and Israel is still in unbelief as a nation (cf. Rom. 11). We now see Christ in His humiliation, made lower than the angels as true humanity, suffering and dying for man’s sin on the cross, and then ascended and seated as our intercessor (Heb. 2: 8, 9, 14, 17, 18). But this is all temporary, until his enemies are made his footstool (Heb. 10:13).

Now back to our scene in Revelation five. The church is no longer on earth. Christ’s intercession and advocacy is no longer needed, so Christ is no longer seated on the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16). Instead He is seen standing and then moving to take the scroll full of Judgment. This is a clear sign that Christ, looking prophetically to the future, is about to proceed with His work as King and Judge; it is now time for “Operation Footstool.”

Is there any wonder therefore that the Lamb is here so greatly revered for what He is about to do. Note that it is when the Lion/Lamb takes the scroll that the actions of worship immediately follow.

#### *Their Actions of Worship (8a)*

- (1) “Fell down before the Lamb.” In the previous chapter God is worshipped as the sovereign Creator, but here the center of heaven’s worship is the Redeemer of mankind. The living beings and the elders fall down before the Lamb in profound prostration of worship and recognition of the Lamb’s finished work of redemption and His worthiness to now accomplish what He is about to do.
- (2) “And they sang” (5:9). Literally, the Greek text say, “and they sing a new song,” present tense of the verb *adw*, which means “to sing” but in the NT it is used of praise to God. “Song” is *wdh* and in the NT it is only used of a sacred song or a song of praise. The use of the present tense is interesting. When John wrote Revelation, he was recording what he had seen through the visions revealed to him. It is sometimes difficult to determine the reason for the use of a particular tense or the aspect (the portrayal of a tense as to progress, simple occurrence, completed action, etc.) of a tense in a given context, but this may be what is called an historic present, though this use is less prevalent in apocalyptic writing than in narrative literature. Most translations translate this as “they sang.” So why the present? John may have used the present simply because he wanted to show the scene as in progress, but more than likely, this is what grammarians call an historical present. Historical presents are often used to introduce, highlight, and bring to prominence the scene that follows, specifically, the song of praise extolling the worthiness of the Lamb to take and open the book.

### *Their Instruments of Worship (8b)*

Harp and golden bowls full of incense are instruments to aid in praise and worship of the Lamb. The indication is that they each not only had a harp, but played it as an expression of their adoration of the Lord.

Since this scene is prophetic of the future, the “golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints” would certainly include the prayers of church age saints who will be in heaven with the elders who are seen around the throne.

But what does this teach us concerning prayer?

- (1) That the bowls are golden stresses the value of prayer to us and especially to God.
- (2) That the bowls are full would stress the extent and abundance of their prayer and worship. Our praise and worship will not be halfhearted or part time then, and it should not be now. The saints will be full of the prayer of praise.
- (3) Incense was burned in the tabernacle and temple which gave off a pleasing odor and ascended upward to God. The incense portrayed the person and work of Jesus Christ who alone satisfies the character of God and is pleasing to Him. Biblical praying and praise to God through the Lord Jesus Christ fills the area with a sweet atmosphere and aroma which calls attention to God’s glory and to Christ’s person.
- (4) But what do the prayers consist of? Lindsey says that the incense “represents the earnest prayers of believers of all past ages begging God to judge Satan and his followers and to liberate mankind and creation from its curse.” This would be in keeping with the example prayer Christ gave to the disciples, “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10).

Another view is that this refers only to the prayers of those then in heaven who are occupied with Jesus Christ and are full of praise only. Barnhouse is probably right when he says,

... today, prayer consists of confession, intercession, and worship. When we confess we are occupied with our sins; when we intercede, we are occupied with human needs, ours and others’ but when we worship we are occupied with Him alone. The day will come when prayer will be emptied of its need of confession. There will be no more laver. Prayer will be emptied of its need for intercession. There will be nothing remaining but that which may be symbolized under the bowls of incense, and all our prayer shall be praise and worship.

### *Their Song of Worship (9-10)*

Again, we should note that the goal of the song is to acclaim the worthiness of the Lamb to unleash the judgments of the seals. This is a keynote of this chapter. Terrible judgments will follow as an expression of God’s holiness and justice against man’s sin and rebellion. But what about God’s love? This is declared in the accomplishments of the Lamb as the gift of God’s love (John 3:16). Further, the Son gave His life as God’s solution to sin. But a large portion of the world has rejected and turned away from God’s Son. In this section we have what is in part a theodicy, a vindication of God’s goodness and justice in the face of the existence of evil and the judgments that will follow.

There are five reasons given in this new song that declare the Lamb as worthy. They fall into three time slots, all being based on the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

- (1) He “was slain” is an obvious reference to the cross and the substitutionary death of Christ for the sin of the world. This looks at the *past* historic event, the demonstration of God’s love for the world.
- (2) The words, “and with your blood you purchased men for God,” point us to the efficacy of Christ’s death and describes both its *past* and *present*. Note that it is viewed as an accomplished fact. “Purchased” is the Greek, *agorazw* and means “to purchase in the market place.” It is used of the redemptive work of Christ which sets us free from sin and death. But the tense, a consummative or effective aorist, points to our redemption as an accomplished fact. There is a present effect in that every time a person believes in Christ, His redemptive death becomes the means of the believer’s salvation.
- (3) “You have made them to be a kingdom” points to a further *present* effect of the cross, the establishment of a kingdom. Whenever a person trusts in Christ, they are rescued from the kingdom of darkness and made a part of a whole new kingdom, a kingdom of light in accord with God’s will for man (Col. 1:13).

(4) “And priests to God” This stresses our *present* representative character. By Christ’s work we have access to God and can serve and represent Him to men here on earth during the church age.

(5) “And they will reign ...” The Greek employs a *future* indicative of a promised future fact. Though God is always on throne, sitting in the heavens and in charge of all that goes on, the church is not ruling today. Though the church will rule with Christ in the future, it was never meant to rule in this present age (1 Cor. 6:2). Rather, the Lord’s promise was, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33, NIV).

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/11-seven-sealed-book-and-lion-who-was-also-lamb-rev-51-14>)

## **Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

Our world is filled with awards. Sports teams keep trophy shops busy with orders. The roster of award shows on television includes the Oscars, Emmys, Tonys, Grammys, and Golden Globes. We have halls of fame for football players, rock bands, rodeo winners, etc. Schools hand out certificates frequently for all manner of achievements. Hollywood has its Walk of Fame. All compete for our attention, whether as spectators to admire achievements of others or as potential candidates to be recognized. Acknowledging achievements is a good thing in and of itself. We must be careful, however, to distinguish proper from improper applause both given to and accepted from our fellow human beings. A primary lesson of Revelation is that God alone is worthy of receiving worship. God alone must be glorified (compare Acts 12:21-23; 14:11-18). Revelation shows us that Christ, the Lamb of God, is also worthy of worshipful praise and glory. We may not understand fully the relationship within the Trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. All three are important in Revelation, but there is no essential division between the three. They are one God. Worship in Heaven is given to the one on the throne and to the Lamb, and this is the same worship. At the beginning of Revelation, “the Lord God . . . the Almighty” describes himself as “the Alpha and the Omega” (Revelation 1:8). At the end of Revelation, Jesus describes himself in the same way (22:13). There is no separation. May all glory be given to the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever.

When God established his covenant with the Israelites at Mount Sinai, he called them to be “a kingdom of priests” (Exodus 19:6). Now, under the new covenant, Christians carry out that role as “a royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9). Unlike under the old covenant, however, our priestly sacrifices do not consist of animals. Rather, our sacrifices are spiritual in nature (1 Peter 2:5); and our priesthood involves being living sacrifices (Romans 12:1). In that light, we are to “offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name” (Hebrews 13:15). Worship must never be about us. Worship, whether corporate or individual, should have an audience of one: the Lord himself. The thanks that we offer can include gratitude that our eternal destiny does not rest on decisions made by three goddesses on Mount Olympus or any other fickle and unpredictable deity. The one true God is utterly consistent, always faithful to his promises, whether those promises involve positive or negative outcomes for people in various contexts. When we first read the book of Revelation, we may be astounded and even terrified by its imagery; but terror gives way to relief as we realize that in the end it is God who wins. Our choice concerns which side we want to be on. But that’s really no choice at all, is it?

## **Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary**

1. Jesus died on earth so that we can live in heaven with Him (Rev. 5:6)
2. Jesus is the only person with the power to redeem mankind (vss. 7-8)
3. The blood of Jesus has the power to save people of every nation (vs. 9)
4. As believers, we become royalty through the grace of God and reign with Him (vs. 10)
5. All living creatures in heaven and earth must worship Jesus (vss. 11-13)
6. Jesus is worthy of eternal praise (vs. 14)