

# The Lion and the Lamb

The Worship of Jesus Christ

Rev 5:1 Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

<sup>2</sup> And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?"

<sup>3</sup> And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it,

<sup>4</sup> and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.

<sup>5</sup> And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

<sup>6</sup> And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

<sup>7</sup> And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.

<sup>8</sup> And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

<sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,

<sup>10</sup> and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

<sup>11</sup> Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands,

<sup>12</sup> saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

<sup>13</sup> And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!"

<sup>14</sup> And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

(Revelation 5:1-14)

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## The Lion and the Lamb

There is a [popular Christian meme](#) that you have seen somewhere—on a painting, a postcard, a poster, or Pinterest. It is the picture of a [lion laying down with a lamb](#). Sometimes they are laying together on a rocky perch, as if the lion has taken the lamb to his home on the rock-strewn African savannah to protect it. Other times they are both laying together eating grass, as if the lion has come to the lamb's pasture to graze. Of course, what makes the image so memorable is that a lamb is an [herbivore](#). By definition, it is under a year of age. It is very gentle at this stage in its life and also among the most venerable of prey in an open field. Meanwhile, the lion is a [carnivore](#). He eats lambs for a snack.

We call him the “king of the jungle” (though, of course, lion’s do not live in jungles).<sup>1</sup>

Where does the image originate? Ask many people and they will tell you it comes from the Bible; some will even say Isaiah. “The lion will lie down with the lamb,” they will tell you. There are two passages in Isaiah that have the lion and the lamb in the same verse. But unfortunately, people have creatively mixed up the lion, the leopard, and the wolf. The first is a famous prediction that “The *wolf* shall dwell [literally sojourn] with the *lamb*, and the *leopard* shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the *lion* and the fattened calf together...” (Isa 11:6). The second is the last verse of Isaiah, “The *wolf* and the *lamb* shall graze together; the *lion* shall eat straw like the ox...” (Isa 65:25).

Both passages are Messianic. The first one is overtly so. It begins with the famous prophecy that “A shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest on him” (Isa 11:1-2; cf. Matt 3:16). He will judge the earth in righteousness (4-5) and the

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<sup>1</sup> I had to look this up, because why do we say the lion is the king of the jungle? “Jungle” comes from a Sanskrit word *jangala*, which is an arid, sparsely grown with trees.” By 1950 the word had come to mean other places overgrown by vegetation in a wild, tangle mass; hence, what we call a jungle. On the lion and Lamb, Jonathan Edwards says, “A Lamb appears to open the book, an exceeding diverse kind of creature from a lion. A lion is a devourer, one that is wont to make terrible slaughter of others; and no creature more easily falls a prey to him than a lamb.” Jonathan Edwards, “The Excellencies of Christ,” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1 (Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 680.

wolf shall dwell with the lamb (6). It immediately then predicts this coming future with an image that reminds us of **Genesis 3:15** and the war between the seed the woman and the seed of the serpent. “The nursing child shall play over the hold of the *cobra*, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the *adder’s den*” (8). The serpent will be defeated. Finally, it speaks of the great age when, “They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (9).

The second passage is **Messianic covertly**, through **parallelism**. It shortens the serpent language to, “*Dust shall be the serpent’s food*” (65:25), echoing the curse of Satan in **Genesis 3:14** that “*dust you shall eat all the days of your life.*” It then quotes the first half of the mountain theme, “They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain,” thus making the parallel complete.

Both of these passages are **eschatological**. **Premillennialists** believe that it refers to a future millennium, prior to the Second Coming. **Postmillennialists** believe it refers to a future millennium which eventually bleeds into the Second Coming. **Amillennialists** believe it refers to the eternal state after the present millennial period is over.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> **Kim Riddlebarger**, “Dr. Riddlebarger Deals with Isaiah 65,” *Possessing the Treasure* (n.d.), <https://mikeratliff.wordpress.com/about/eschatology/amillennialism/dr-riddlebarger-deals-with-isaiah-65/>.

This question of the origin of the lion and the lamb is quite relevant to our passage today. There is only one other passage in all the Bible, outside of these two in Isaiah, that has the lion and lamb imagery so close to the Messiah. Revelation 5 has certain links back to our Isaiah texts. **Revelation 5:5**, “... Behold, the *Lion* of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David...” The “root of David” is a nod to **Isaiah 11:1** and the stump of Jesse and his “roots.” **Revelation 5:6** then says, “... I saw a *Lamb* standing, as though it had been slain...” So just like Isaiah, this chapter has the lion and lamb together (though neither is laying down in Revelation 5).

*The Lion* of Judah has its roots back in **Genesis 49**, a passage we looked at last time as the origin of the “banners” (**Num 2:2**) of Israel and how it was then to camp around the tabernacle in the earthly mirror of the heavenly zodiac which itself emulates the invisible worship of God in heaven from Rev 4. There is a little more of this relationship to the stars<sup>3</sup> remaining in Revelation 5 and we’ll see that in a bit.

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<sup>3</sup> Technically, it is called “astral prophecy.” “Astral prophecy refers to those ancient narratives reporting the interaction of prophets and seers with star-related, celestial personages and the outcomes of that interaction.” B. J. Malina, *On the Genre and Message of Revelation: Star Visions and Sky Journeys* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 19; see also 25–26. Quoted in David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, vol. 52A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1997), lxxxviii–lxxxix. Beale has a good discussion on the cautions of trying to fit the entire book into this genre and of Malina’s work (which he calls “creative, well-researched, and intriguing”) in particular (Beale, *Revelation*, 42-43). Though I can’t get a hold of this book, it seems especially important given that Malina’s main premise is “that John was an astral prophet who was able to undergo a sky journey (soul flight) by means of altering his consciousness.” John Robert van

As for *the lamb*, this has its roots in the typology of the **Passover lamb**, the **daily lamb sacrifices** in the temple, the prophecies of the **Suffering Servant** as a lamb in **Isaiah 53:7** and the “**gentle lamb**” of **Jeremiah 11:19**, even the **scapegoat** of Leviticus 16, though granted this is a goat rather than a lamb. Perhaps its earliest idea is found in Isaac asking his father Abraham, “**Where is the lamb for the sacrifice,**” when Abraham was being tested in the sacrifice of his own son (**Gen 22:7**).<sup>4</sup> All of this prepares us for diving into this incredible chapter on Christ.

## Revelation 5: Its Context and Structure

As we begin, let’s get a feel for the context of our passage. The **setting is heaven** (**Rev 4:1**). John is standing before **the throne** of God the Father and other thrones are here. It is a glorious scene of brilliant colors, terrifying sounds, and fantastic creatures that **surround, guard,** and especially **praise** the God who sits on the throne. We’ve seen how this praise in the invisible realm is mirrored in the

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Niekerk, “The Genre of the Revelation of John: A cultural Plausible Framework,” Dissertation to the University of Pretoria (M. Th. 2018), [https://www.academia.edu/38327738/The\\_genre\\_of\\_the\\_Revelation\\_of\\_John\\_A\\_cultural\\_plausible\\_framework\\_pdf](https://www.academia.edu/38327738/The_genre_of_the_Revelation_of_John_A_cultural_plausible_framework_pdf).

<sup>4</sup> **Leon Morris**, *The Gospel according to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 128-29.

heavenly host of stars which is in turn mirrored in the worship of the Old and New Testament churches.

Ch. 5 introduces **a problem**. It is a problem that will arise at the heart of our passage today. It is a **problem of worthiness** and the question of how creatures can praise God at all, especially those who are in active rebellion against him? It's one of the great questions that can be asked, and far too few ever bother to do it. But we will, **for today we must**.

As I've just hinted, Revelation 5 has its own internal structure. It works on two levels. The first is that of **the larger context** of the seven seals. **Revelation 5:1** introduces us to them for the first time when it says, "**Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.**" The full section of **the seven seals** is Rev 4-7, the second of the seven "cycles" of the book. But 4-5 have a special relationship, being connected by one large chiasm and a second through parallel songs.

There are **25 verses** between them. It is interesting that the Holy Spirit inspired **18** of them to make up the outer frame (A, A<sup>1</sup>). That's more than two thirds of the verses in just one of the five parallel sections.

A. 4 living creatures + 24 elders falling before the glory of the Lord on His throne and worship him (Rev 4:1-11)

B. ...

C. ...

D. ...

E. ...

D1. ...

E1. ...

C1. ...

B1. ...

A1. 4 living creatures + 24 elders, angels, all creation fall before the Lamb and worship Him (5:8-14)

Why would that be? It is because it is in these two outer frames that all five of our songs appear. As I said a moment ago, these songs frame their own very deliberate chiastic structure, and we will see why later.

## Chiastic Structure of the Five Songs of Revelation 4-5

A. "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" (4:8)

B. "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created." (4:11)

C. "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,<sup>10</sup> and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." (5:9)

B<sup>1</sup>. "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" (5:12)

A<sup>1</sup>. "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" (5:13)



The point to see here is that **this structure puts one song front and center**. This song praises the Lamb of God *who was slain*. He receives **a seven-fold perfect praise** of power, wealth, wisdom, might, honor, glory, and blessing.

This center, this praise of the slain Lamb, **becomes the answer** to the center of the two chapters when viewed together. In other words, the two chiasms are speaking to one another. This center badly needs an answer. Why? The Apostle begins to “**weep loudly**” (5:4a). His uncontrollable wailing needs a remedy. Curiously, his weeping has a parallel as the second part of the center of the two chapters and it **anticipates** the center song. For one of the 24 elders said to him, “**Weep no more**” (5a).

**A. 4 living creatures + 24 elders falling before the glory of the Lord** on His throne and **worship him** (Rev 4:1-11)

**B. ...**

**C. ...**

**D. ...**

**E. ... I began to weep loudly (5:4a)**

**D<sup>1</sup>. ...**

**E<sup>1</sup>. ... One of the elders said to me, “Weep no more” (5a)**

**C<sup>1</sup>. ...**

**B<sup>1</sup>. ...**

**A<sup>1</sup>. 4 living creatures + 24 elders, angels, all creation fall before the Lamb and worship Him** (5:8-14)

There's one more interesting thing I noted as I begin to study this passage. I did a quick "passage guide" search in my Logos Bible Software and was rather blown away by one of the results. It has a section called "Old Testament Quotations and Allusions." It found 24 different OT passages that are related to Revelation 5.

### OT Parallels to Revelation 5

Gen 49:9-10		Rev 5:5		Ps 96:1		Rev 5:9		Isa 29:11		Rev 5:1
Ex 19:6		Rev 5:10		Ps 98:1		Rev 5:9		Isa 42:10		Rev 5:9
1Kg 22:19		Rev 5:1, 7, 13		Ps 141:2		Rev 5:8		Isa 53:6-7		Rev 5:6, 12
1Chr 29:11		Rev 5:12		Ps 144:9		Rev 5:9		Isa 61:6		Rev 5:10
2Chr 18:18		Rev 5:1, 7, 13		Ps 149:1		Rev 5:9		Ezek 1:26-27		Rev 5:1, 7, 13
Ps 33:3		Rev 5:9		Isa 6:1		Rev 5:1, 7, 13		Ezek 2:9-10		Rev 5:1
Ps 40:3		Rev 5:9		Isa 11:1		Rev 5:5		Dan 7:10		Rev 5:11
Ps 47:8		Rev 5:1, 7, 13		Isa 11:10		Rev 5:5		Zech 4:10		Rev 5:6

Now, some of these are themselves related to each other, sometimes even identically. But the point should serve to impress upon you that what is taking place in this chapter is **profoundly rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures**, be it through prophecy, typology, visions, titles, or concepts. And since the focus of the entire chapter is on Jesus Christ, that ought to tell you about his vital importance in the Old Testament. Great fulfillments and antitypes are to be found here and they in turn for the center of our entire existence.

# Who is Worthy to Open the Scroll and Break the Seals? The Lion!

We begin in **Rev 5:1**, B. of the chiasm. B<sup>1</sup> will conclude in **vs. 7**. Here we are introduced to a new vision, though it is in the same place. “Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll (*biblion*) written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.”

A. 4 living creatures + 24 elders falling before the glory of the Lord on His throne and worship him (Rev 4:1-11)

B. I saw, in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne, a book written inside + outside, sealed shut with seven seals (Rev 5:1)

C. ...

D. ...

E. ...

D<sup>1</sup>. ...

E<sup>1</sup>. ...

C<sup>1</sup>. ...

B<sup>1</sup>. ...

A<sup>1</sup>. 4 living creatures + 24 elders, angels, all creation fall before the Lamb and worship Him (5:8-14)

It is worth noting that in the constellations we looked at last time, **Cepheus**, the enthroned king at the center (north) of the fixed position of the stars around which the entire heavens spin, is sometimes holding a scroll in his hand.

We will not learn more about the contents of this scroll until chapter 6, but it is notable that many have seen here an echo of **Ezekiel 2:9-10** where, after himself seeing the

heavenly throne room and one seated on it *like a son of man*, a scroll is seen in his hand. It is opened, there is writing on the front and the back, and on its words were lamentation and mourning and woe. Judgment is coming. The glorified Christ is holding the scroll and unrolling it. But we don't know any of that, yet, in Revelation.

We do know that scrolls are books (Gk: *biblion*) or messages that are rolled up. Often times they are sealed, and if it the king's scroll, it is sealed with his seal. This must be the case here because it is "sealed with seven seals" (5:1). It must remain sealed until the right moment. Isaiah 29:11 LXX has something similar, "all these things shall be to you as the words of this sealed book (*biblion*)..." So does Daniel 12:4 LXX, in an allusion that Logos did not catch. "Daniel, close the words, and seal the book (*biblion*) to the time of the end; until many are taught, and knowledge is increased" (Dan 12:4). Just before starting this study of Revelation, we learned that these words dealt with both the First and Second Comings of Christ. Both passages, along with Ezekiel, deal with judgment.

Suddenly, as the Apostle's gaze is fixed upon the seals, he sees "A mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice..." He isn't going to sing this time. Rather, he is going to

announce a question to the court of heaven. “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” (Rev 5:2).

A. 4 living creatures + 24 elders falling before the glory of the Lord on His throne and worship him (Rev 4:1-11)

B. I saw, in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne, a book written inside + outside, sealed shut with seven seals (Rev 5:1)

C. Who is worthy to open the book + break its seals (Rev 5:2)

D. ...

E. ...

D<sup>1</sup>. ...

E<sup>1</sup>. ...

C<sup>1</sup>. ...

B<sup>1</sup>. ...

A<sup>1</sup>. 4 living creatures + 24 elders, angels, all creation fall before the Lamb and worship Him (5:8-14)

This is a question we should seriously wonder about. For the last verse of the previous chapter, not two verses away from here had the twenty-four elders casting down their crowns and singing, “*Worthy are you, our Lord and God...*” (Rev 4:11). **God is worthy!** The one on the throne is worthy. Only God is worthy. He is the Lord, God, Almighty. This is what we learned from the entire previous chapter. The mightiest, eldest, most glorious, most holy creatures of heaven itself bow before him and ascribe to him worth. **They throw their very crowns at his feet** as if to say we are not worthy. God alone is worthy.

Can he not open the scroll and break its seals? Of course, he can. But God wants someone else to open it, so he commands a mighty angel announce this dire question, for it is time that the scroll be opened and read. “Go and ask the court, the attendants, the elders, the living creatures. Ask everyone, ‘Who is worthy to open the scroll?’”

They look around. They begin to discuss. First, the oldest. Then, the most mysterious. The most glorious. The most holy. The most powerful. Those given the task of guarding the very throne itself. Person by person, being by being, one after another after another, the answer is the same. The throne room of heaven is unanimous. “And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it” (Rev 5:3).

A. 4 living creatures + 24 elders falling before the glory of the Lord on His throne and worship him (Rev 4:1-11)

B. I saw, in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne, a book written inside + outside, sealed shut with seven seals (Rev 5:1)

C. Who is worthy to open the book + break its seals (Rev 5:2)

D. **No one in heaven, earth, under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it (5:3)**

E. ...

D<sup>1</sup>. ...

E<sup>1</sup>. ...

C<sup>1</sup>. ...

B<sup>1</sup>. ...

A<sup>1</sup>. 4 living creatures + 24 elders, angels, all creation fall before the Lamb and worship Him (5:8-14)

The judgment includes **the totality of the universe**. The ancients thought of the universe in a three-fold manner. **Heaven. Earth. Under the earth**. This included everything and everyone. **Heaven** is where they are. It is represented by so many trillions times trillions of stars that we do not have minds to conceive of it. The stars we can see in the night sky on the clearest night is one grain of sand on all the oceans of earth's beaches. None of them are worthy.

The **earth** contains all the living creatures. Genesis tells us this includes all the animals, birds, swarming things, marine life, insects. Adding these together is as pointless as adding the stars. Even human beings, there are so many of us it would fill 100,000 Mile High Stadiums to fit us all in. None of the creatures of earth are worthy.

**Under the earth** is a way of talking about the realm of the dead, Shoel or Hades. How many humans have died? How many demons haunt there? It is incalculable. No one under the earth is worthy. Of all these, not a single solitary creature is worthy to open this scroll or to break its seals.

Suddenly, John is uncontrollably **swept up in emotion**. **“And I began to weep loudly.”** This is the first half of the center of Revelation 4-5.

A. 4 living creatures + 24 elders falling before the glory of the Lord on His throne and worship him (Rev 4:1-11)

B. I saw, in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne, a book written inside + outside, sealed shut with seven seals (Rev 5:1)

C. Who is worthy to open the book + break its seals (Rev 5:2)

D. No one in heaven, earth, under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it (5:3)

E. I began to weep loudly (5:4a)

D<sup>1</sup>. ...

E<sup>1</sup>. ...

C<sup>1</sup>. ...

B<sup>1</sup>. ...

A<sup>1</sup>. 4 living creatures + 24 elders, angels, all creation fall before the Lamb and worship Him (5:8-14)

I imagine John in his vision being suddenly carried away to all the places of the universe, seeing everything that lives in all places and all times. It takes a while to go through them all. It takes forever! Lifetimes of visions pass before him in an instant and he is overwhelmed. No one can open this scroll. No one. “No one was found worthy to open the scroll of to look into it” (4b). It is repeated for emphasis.

A. 4 living creatures + 24 elders falling before the glory of the Lord on His throne and worship him (Rev 4:1-11)

B. I saw, in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne, a book written inside + outside, sealed shut with seven seals (Rev 5:1)

C. Who is worthy to open the book + break its seals (Rev 5:2)

D. No one in heaven, earth, under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it (5:3)

E. I began to weep loudly (5:4a)

D<sup>1</sup>. Because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look in it (5:4b)

E<sup>1</sup>. ...

C<sup>1</sup>. ...

B<sup>1</sup>. ...

A<sup>1</sup>. 4 living creatures + 24 elders, angels, all creation fall before the Lamb and worship Him (5:8-14)



It also leads to **the climactic answer**. Is there truly no one in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth who could do this? No one in all the universe?

Then, one of the twenty-four elders began to speak. We don't know which one. It doesn't matter. All that matters is what he says to John. **"Weep no more."** This is the **climactic center of the entire throne scene**, the answer to John's emotional outburst. And what a strange thing it is. Usually, we get some amazing theology or doctrine at the heart of a passage. Here, we get three words of eternal comfort. The Apostle who has become a prophet begins to calm down. Weep no more, for there is One. Who is he?

- A. 4 living creatures + 24 elders falling before the glory of the Lord on His throne and worship him (Rev 4:1-11)
  - B. I saw, in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne, a book written inside + outside, sealed shut with seven seals (Rev 5:1)
    - C. Who is worthy to open the book + break its seals (Rev 5:2)
      - D. No one in heaven, earth, under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it (5:3)
        - E. I began to weep loudly (5:4a)
          - D<sup>1</sup>. Because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look in it (5:4b)
            - E<sup>1</sup>. One of the elders said to me, "Weep no more" (5a)
              - C<sup>1</sup>. ...
                - B<sup>1</sup>. ...
                  - A<sup>1</sup>. 4 living creatures + 24 elders, angels, all creation fall before the Lamb and worship Him (5:8-14)

Before answering the question, we must remember that the whole point of chapter 4 is that **God alone is worthy**. Imagine that you are a **Unitarian** reading this passage up to

this moment. You believe in One God. That's it. No plurality, only a monistic divine essence. You know that there is only one who is worthy, so who would you expect to open the scroll? The one sitting on the throne! That's how a deist would read it. That's how a Jehovah's Witness should read it. That's how a modern Jew would read it. That's how a lot of ancient Jews would read it, especially with all of the OT imagery going on in these two chapters.

That's not how our passage unfolds. The elder points over yonder and exclaims, “Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David.” That's not at all what we should expect. We just heard that no creature on earth is worthy. Isn't a lion a creature? This is no ordinary lion.

Recall that **one of the four living creatures has a face of a lion**. He is represented in the sky by the constellation Leo. Leo is a lion. And it is **full of stars**. But again, no one in heaven was worthy either. Is he talking about that one living creature? No. There was a prophecy of a **very special coming “star”** by the prophet Balaam. “I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel” (**Num 24:17**). He is prophesying of the coming Messiah—the star that is human. **A divine human**. From heaven *and* earth.

Leo was represented in the banner of the tribe of Judah in Jacob's prophecy of the coming Messiah. "Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?" (Gen 49:9). It was to Judah that Balaam's scepter rightly belongs. Jacob's prophecy continues, "*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 the peoples*" (10). The elder calls him "The Root of David." Isaiah called him the "Root of Jesse," David's Father. Both were from the line of Judah.

As we would expect of a lion, the elder says he "has conquered" and this means "He can open the scroll and its seven seals" (Rev 5:5). The answer repeats the question.

A. 4 living creatures + 24 elders falling before the glory of the Lord on His throne and worship him (Rev 4:1-11)

B. I saw, in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne, a book written inside + outside, sealed shut with seven seals (Rev 5:1)

C. Who is worthy to open the book + break its seals (Rev 5:2)

D. No one in heaven, earth, under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it (5:3)

E. I began to weep loudly (5:4a)

D<sup>1</sup>. Because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look in it (5:4b)

E<sup>1</sup>. One of the elders said to me, "Weep no more" (5a)

C<sup>1</sup>. The Lion of Judah is He who opens the book + its seals (5:5b)

B<sup>1</sup>. ...

A<sup>1</sup>. 4 living creatures + 24 elders, angels, all creation fall before the Lamb and worship Him (5:8-14)

It is a strong picture—a conquering lion. Brute strength. Powerful jaws. Ferocity of the kill. But is a lion, even one like this really worthy to open the scroll?

## Who is Worthy? The Lamb!

John’s vision changes and he sees a new sight. His gaze returns to the throne and the four living creatures. “Between [them] and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain” (Rev 5:6). Jonathan Edwards notices, “John was told of a Lion that had prevailed to open the book, and probably expected to see a lion in his vision; but while he is expecting, behold a Lamb appears.”<sup>5</sup> The lion and the lamb. Let’s look at a few things.

First, note the location of the Lamb. He is in the midst of the throne, the four living creatures, and the twenty-four elders.<sup>6</sup> While this is a picture of an invisible place, we can return one last time to our zodiac-mirror idea to see how the creation mirrors heaven. Some scholars have suggested that this is pictured in Aries, the Ram.<sup>7</sup> I think this is possible, though rams and lambs are slightly different (lambs are babies up to a year old, rams are males over a year old),

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<sup>5</sup> Edwards, “Excellencies,” 680.

<sup>6</sup> The ESV seems to have two different prepositions “between” and “among;” the Greek is the same (*en mesō*).

<sup>7</sup> Beale notes that Malina sees this connection. See Beale, 42 and note 28.

because some of the typology of the OT that overlaps what is going on here consists of (sacrificial) rams. However, there is a better candidate.

The next verse moves the lamb to the proximity of the throne. “**And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne**” (Rev 5:7). Again, think of **Cepheus**, the king on the throne holding the scroll. Directly beneath him is the north star, which is the main star that makes up what we call the Little Dipper. Below it is what we call the Big Dipper. Both of those are usually depicted in star-charts as the Great Bear (Ursa Major) and the Little Bear (Ursa Minor).

The North Star (Polaris) was sometimes depicted as part of a mountain.<sup>8</sup> Both constellations together, however, have deep echoes of an animal pen, **a sheep pen**. In fact, the constellation just to the left of the Big Dipper is Boötes—**The Shepherd**. Sometimes, the ancients thought of the seven stars of the Big Dipper as sheep that were making their way to this Shepherd. And in the Little Dipper, the little

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<sup>8</sup> See n. 13 in the previous sermon. **Going Deeper**. **Isaiah 14:12-13** has Lucifer, the Shining One related to the serpent of **Genesis 3:1** trying to set himself above all the stars of God in the north (*saphon*). Curiously, not long before Isaiah lived, the north star was not Polaris, but Thuban, located in Draco, the Dragon-Serpent. Even more curious is that above the head of Draco stands what is usually depicted as Hercules who is stomping on his head (which brings to mind images of **Genesis 3:15**).

Sheep Pen has lambs making their way to Cepheus.<sup>9</sup> It is fitting that the heavens are declaring the glory of God and of his Christ, just as **Psalm 19** and **Romans 10:18** tell us.

But what some have called “**The Gospel in the Stars**” is at best a commentary, to the written word. And there’s often fudging to make it work. We need to think about **the theology** going on here with this lamb. First, it is **standing, as though it had been slain**. This strange language is doing double duty. First, “**as though it had been slain**.” This is a reference to the OT types of **lamb sacrifices**. Isaac asks his father, “**Where is the lamb for the burnt offering**” (**Gen 22:7**). These offerings were given in praise to God. But Isaac did not know that Abraham was being asked to offer his “only begotten” son (see **Heb 11:17**). God tells Moses to have Israel “**kill the Passover lamb**” (**Ex 12:21**) so that the angel of death might pass over their houses when the 10<sup>th</sup> and worst plague of all—the killing of the firstborn—hit Egypt.

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<sup>9</sup> **Going Deeper.** There’s a lot going on here. The main star in the Big Dipper is Dubhe, which means “a flock.” Two other stars are Phaeda (“guarded”) and Alkaid (“assembled”). Perhaps the best summary of this is **Frances Rolleston**, *Mazzaroth—The Constellations* (London: Rivingtons, 1862), Part II: 29-30; [http://iapsop.com/ssoc/1862\\_rolleston\\_mazzaroth.pdf](http://iapsop.com/ssoc/1862_rolleston_mazzaroth.pdf).

There is also a strange relationship in Hebrew between the word “bear” and “sheep pen.” The Bear (Job 9:9; 38:32) is Ayish. The LXX sees it as the Pleadies (9:9) or Hesperon (38:32). The Vulgate sees it as “Arcturum” (in the Boötes) and Vesperum. However, it can obviously also be seen as Ursa Major. Now, the usual word for a “bear” in Hebrew is Dob. But the word for a sheep pen (Micah 2:12) is Dober. Perhaps there was a confusion of the words. Certainly, there is a semantic overlap. See the discussion in **Christopher L. Pepler**, *The Book of Revelation: In the Light of the Stars* (South African Theological Seminary Press, 2019).

Both of these are a foreshadowing of the prophecy in Isaiah 53 of the coming Suffering Servant. “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter ... he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people” (Isa 53:7-8). Now we see the main reason why no one on earth or under the earth is worthy, and it may even relate to the heavenly beings. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. No one is worthy. This demands weeping! If you do not weep over this, you cannot have the sacrifice of Christ for you. The Lamb would come to die for the sins of the people as the sacrifice that alone brings the forgiveness our sins deserve—for we are not worthy.

But the lamb is also standing. This is a picture of the resurrection. It *had been* slain. It is no longer dead! Isaiah goes on, “It was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days...” (10). Psalm 16 is similar, especially when you understand that Christ is the singer of all the Psalms! “For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in your

presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

Here then we have now seen that this lion is **from heaven** (a star), **from earth** (born of the line of Judah and Jacob and David), and that he even **descended to the realm of the dead** (under the earth). No one is worthy who is from heaven or earth or under the earth, but what about one who has been to all three?

This lamb has **seven horns** and **seven eyes**, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. The horns are a symbol of **power**. In Daniel they represent entire kingdoms and their kings. This lion-king is a great ruler. The seven spirits of God are a description of the Holy Spirit from previous chapters in Revelation. He is full of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ was born “**King of the Jews**.” He was worshiped by the magi when they came because they saw his royal star rise in the east. At his baptism, he was **filled with the Holy Spirit** who descended upon him like a dove that he might complete his ministry as prophet, priest, and king. That ministry culminated in his death for sin as “**the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world**” (**John 1:29**). He descended to the realm of the dead (Sheol/Hades/Hell) where he proclaimed his victory over sin, death, and the



devil and he rose from the dead and is alive forevermore. This is the Lamb who “took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne” (Rev 3:7). This is because he has ascended to heaven as is now at the right hand—indeed, he is the Right Hand of the Father.

Now, I want to discuss something. Return to this idea of someone reading this passage as a Unitarian. A Jew. Suddenly, they see that there is someone else worthy besides God on his throne. What must this mean? Remember, only God is worthy of worship! While what John sees here might therefore cause “non-Christian Jews [and other Unitarians] to shrink back in horror, aware that none but deity is worthy,”<sup>10</sup> this is the Bible’s way of teaching you that not only is Jesus a star, a lion, a lamb, and one who has been to Sheol—he is himself very God of very God. He is no *created* star, no *created* lion, no *created* lamb, no *created* person.

This is the mystery of the Trinity that we saw in the first song, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come.” Thrice holy. Thrice omnipotent. Thrice everlasting. The Triune God is being praised in heaven. There are many who deny the Trinity to their own everlasting shame and destruction. Many teach that a

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<sup>10</sup> Steve C. Singleton, “Worthy is the Lamb’: The Christology of Revelation 5,” *Academia* (1998): 6. [https://www.academia.edu/4863049/\\_Worthy\\_is\\_the\\_Lamb\\_The\\_Christology\\_of\\_Revelation\\_5](https://www.academia.edu/4863049/_Worthy_is_the_Lamb_The_Christology_of_Revelation_5).

Patriarchal church was tyrannically suppressing the true religion of Gnosticism and Arianism and other actual heresies. Last time we saw that many Trinitarians seem almost ashamed to see the Trinity in this song, saying it is reading things into the passage that aren't really there. “Away with the numerology. Let's just stick to the language of ‘holy, exceeding holy.’”

But this is the only answer that the passage allows us to come to. This Lion, this Lamb is the same Person, and **that Person is God**. Heretics say that the Trinity is irrational and contradictory. We admit that it is mysterious, but not a contradiction. We believe that there is **only one God** who is omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, and everlasting. But we believe that **this God exists in three distinct and co-eternal Persons**: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They each partake of the fullness of the divine attributes fully. This is the only conclusion we can come to when we read passages like this. Anything less is a denial of that which we are forced to conclude. The most powerful creatures in heaven said no one is worthy. No one. Not a single one in heaven, no one on earth, no one under the earth, not even the gods of the realm of the dead. No one.

# Three Great Songs of the Lion-Lamb

This sets the stage for arriving at the center song which is the answer to the central problem of the weeping. So we read, “And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each hold a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints...” (Rev 5:8). While there is foreshadowing of golden bowls and prayers of incense here, notice here the harps. My guess is that this may be the source of the idea that angels play all day long on their harps aloft fluffy pillowy clouds. The problem is, these are not Precious Moments angels. They are the most powerful throne guardians in the galaxy.

They are in the temple of God. Their priestly duty is to guard the throne. Nevertheless, they take their harps. It is fascinating that this is emulated in David’s temple. The greatest king of Israel organized the temple servants into twenty-four orders of Levites who were “to prophesy in giving thanks and praising the Lord” (1Ch 25:6-31; Josephus, *Antiquities* 7.363-67). The job of the earthly throne guardians is identical to that of the heavenly cherubim elders.

If they have harps, then they are getting ready to sing like the Psalmists on earth. And this is what they sang.

“They sang and new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals...” (Rev 5:9). Worthy. This is what God alone is and was in Revelation 4 and ever will be. So why is he worthy?

There is an important hint in the phrase “new song.” The phrase appears seven times in the OT and curiously, as Tremper Longman argues, it always occurs in a military context.<sup>11</sup> What is that military context? The death of the Lamb of God. The cross was the ultimate battle of spiritual warfare, even as Christ’s ministry was a proclamation of power in binding demons. In the OT, the new song is always sung to Yahweh, the LORD of Hosts. In the NT, it is sung to Jesus. In a word, Jesus is Yahweh in human flesh.

Listen to Psalm 96:2. “Sing to the LORD, bless his name.” Why? “Tell of his salvation day to day.” This is what they now sing in heaven—the salvation of the Lamb. “For you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.” Salvation! This is such a grand and rich theological doctrine of such importance in both Testaments, that we are going to spend an entire sermon on it next time.

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<sup>11</sup> “The designation “new song” occurs seven times in the OT (Ps 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isa 42:10) and twice in the NT (Rev 5:9; 14:3), each time in a holy war context.” Tremper Longman III, “Psalm 98,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 27:3 (1984): 269.

This **salvation is from sin**, a main reason we are not worthy. Ephesians says of this blood, “**In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses**” (Eph 1:7). **Forgiveness**. God does not see those forgiven through the blood as debtors, as dirty, or as deplorable. Their debts are wiped away. Their dirt is washed off. Their dreadful condition is changed and they are declared “not guilty” and forgiven by God in Christ.

This **salvation is from death**. The lamb was *slain*, but now he *stands*. So too. Daniel 12 where the scroll is sealed in a parallel to this chapter says, “**You shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of days ... And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life**” (Dan 12:13, 2). Because he lives, those who put their faith in Christ will live too.

This **salvation is from the devil**. Do you remember how Isaiah 11 and 65 are in mind and how both of those describe the fall of **the serpent** and the victory of men? *Dust shall be the serpent’s food. The nursing child shall play over the hold of a cobra.* Jesus fought and defeated Satan in those three days of the darkest darkness the world has ever known. God himself descended to realm of the dead, demanded that the gates of hell be opened, and led a great host of captives out on his train.

Who hears the new song of the victory of Yahweh in Psalm 96? “Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples” (Ps 96:3). It was a prediction of the work of the Lamb of God. “... You ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.” If they have been ransomed, then they need to hear about the war and the victory. For how can they call upon one in whom they have not heard, and how can they believe if they have not been called? Thus, it is the great missionary endeavor of the church to proclaim this song of the elders and living creatures in heaven, that men might turn to Christ and know redemption. He is calling to you. Have you heard his call and bowed your knee to Aslan, the Lion of Judah? Have you asked him to forgive your sins and save you?

Those who have need to know the second half of this glorious song. “And you have made them a kingdom of priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth” (Rev 5:10). We will look at this as well next time in much more detail, but know that this too is OT language, of Israel camped at Mt. Sinai (Ex 19:6). We are the new Israel, those who believe in Christ. He has taken the priesthood of the Levites and given it to all his church that we may serve him with our bodies and with his people. And in this, we will

reign like princes of the great king, like the very stars of heaven, the elders themselves with their crowns.

This central song teaches us why Jesus is the center of Revelation 5 and why **he alone is the answer to all weeping and mourning**. **Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted (Matt 5:4)**. For the Lamb of God has **conquered** death itself by dying in our place that we might not have to face the Second Death.

It is fascinating that the worship of God in Revelation 4-5 **parallels** the arrest of God in **John 18**. Just as the elders *fell down* before the Father on the throne, so also they “**fell down before the Lamb**” (**Rev 5:8**). This parallels what we have already seen, that “**they came to Jesus with lanterns and torches ... when he said, ‘I am,’ they drew back and fell to the ground**” (**John 18:3**). Well, this Lamb also has those seven spirits which are like burning fire (**Rev 5:6; 4:5**). It’s the same God and the same reaction no matter if he is in heaven or on earth. But he let them take him to his death and because of it, he alone is worthy of worship.

Just prior to his arrest and death, in John 17, our Lord prays his **great high priestly prayer**. Part of his prayer is directed to his Father in heaven. And he says, “**I am no more in the world**” (**John 17:11**). He knew that he was about to

die. “*I come to you*” (13). He knew that he would be raised and ascend to heaven. He prayed and told his Father he would come to him. And in **Revelation 5:7**, “*He (the Lamb) came to the throne and took the scroll*” from his Father.

It is also quite like what **Daniel** see when one like a **son of man** came riding on the clouds of heaven to the **Ancient of Days** (**Dan 7:13**). And what they sing also harkens to the prophecy of what he would receive in that vision. “*To him was giving dromion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him*” (**Dan 7:14**). Why was a kingdom given to him? Because he conquered, he came from heaven, died on earth, and vanquished the powers of hell.

His work as the God-man has won him the praises of all creatures. Hence, the two songs to take us to the end of our chapter. “*Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders, the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing’*” (**Rev 5:11-12**). All those voices singing in unison. I imagine John probably wept again, not from sorrow or despair, but from fear and joy.



Notice that the Lamb **receives more honor** that even the Father. In the parallel (last song of ch. 4), the Lord God receives glory and honor and power. Christ receives a seven-fold honor. Perfect praise. All power. All wealth. All wisdom. All might. All honor. All glory. All Blessing. He served his Father in all things. So to him belongs all the worship that the Father receives. And this is as the Father ordained it. In another parallel in John, we learn that “**the Father has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father**” (**John 5:22-23**).

The last song recalls the first, yet extends it now to the Son as they all do in chapter 5. “**Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come**” becomes, “**To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!**” The parallel is the time frame:

*Eternal praises evermore.*  
Father and Son alike adore.  
Him on the throne and the Lamb.  
Who was and is and is to come, the Great I Am.  
Blessing, honor, glory, and might.  
The Son has set all things aright.  
Father, Son, and Spirit adore.  
*Eternal praises evermore.*

This then is the story of the lion and the lamb. It is a story that has perhaps never been summarized as well as Augustine did many centuries ago. Listen to his Christ-centered words.

Who is this, both lamb and lion? He endured death as a lamb; he devoured it as a lion. Who is this, both lamb and lion? Gentle and strong, lovable and terrifying, innocent and mighty, silent when he was being judged, roaring when he comes to judge. Or perhaps both in his passion lamb and lion, and also in his resurrection lamb and lion. Let us see him as a lamb in his passion. It was stated a moment ago: “Like a lamb in the presence of his shearer he was without voice, thus he did not open his mouth.” Let us see him as a lion in his passion; Jacob said, “You have gone up, lying down you have slept like a lion.” Let us see him as a lamb in his resurrection. The book of Revelation, when it was talking about the eternal glory of virgins, “They follow the lamb, it is said, wherever he goes.” The same book of Revelation says, what I mentioned just now, “The lion from the tribe of Judah has conquered, to open the book.” Why a lamb in his passion? Because he underwent death without being guilty of any iniquity. Why a lion in his passion? Because in being slain he slew death. Why a lamb in his resurrection? Because his innocence is everlasting. Why a lion in his resurrection? Because everlasting also is his might.

(Augustine, SERMON 375A.1)<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> In William C. Weinrich, ed., *Revelation*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 73.

May every creature hearing these songs sing along, “Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb” (Rev 5:13). The worship of the lamb is now. Isaiah’s Messianic predictions are being fulfilled now. Isaiah’s eschatological predictions are being fulfilled now.

Blessed be the Lion.

Blessed be the Lamb.

Blessed be the Father.

Blessed be the Son.

Happy be all whom the Son redeems,  
who have been given to him by his Father.

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