

WORTHY IS THE LAMB!

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Reading: Revelation 5:1-14

INTRO: Soon we will be back in Hebrews. It is a somewhat difficult book to preach and so I take time for other messages in between chapters. Our subject this morning comes from Revelation 5 verse 12. Let me introduce that verse by giving the context. The book of Revelation gives us an outline of the book in 1:19. It says:

19 "Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

The things John had seen are the things of chapter 1. The things which are, and still are; are the things of chapters 2-3. The things which shall take place after the things that are, are the things of chapters 4-22.

Now, in the things that are, we have the first section of chapters 2-3. It is the Church age pictured by seven churches. We have gone through those chapters in the past and they are available online at sermonaudio.com/mecl. Now in chapters 4-5 John is caught up into heaven. It is a rapture, if you like.

1 And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

2 Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?"

3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.

4 So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.

And if no one had been found worthy to open this scroll, as I see it, we would not have the book of Revelation from chapters 6 onward. When you read through the OT you come to the end in the book of Malachi. It is like reading a book without the end of the story. It is like when you are reading a romance story, and you get to where it looks like this young couple will get married, but the last chapter is missing.

Then you get a new section in the Bible called the NT. And now you have a major shift in the program of God and the Church enters. And let us say you read through now to the end of the book of Jude, and let us say the NT ended there. You still have no final chapter. Then when you read the book of Revelation you get a complete last chapter to the entire book. In this book you get a panorama of the entire NT and how everything ends. You see what happens to the lost and what happens to the saved. And you see that man ends up on a new earth and God comes down to dwell with man forever. It is such a clear ending to the book and it ends up like this: And they got married and lived happily ever after. At the end of the Bible you come to darkest part of the story of man and then at the very last you come to where man lives happily ever after.

When you come to the end of the Church age in chapter 3, John is caught up to heaven, just like the Church will be. But before one begins on the tribulation, which follows the rapture, one is introduced to a scene in heaven, and that is recorded in 4:1-5:14.

When I taught this book in Bible class I had students draw a picture of the scene presented in these two chapters. You can use an A for angels, a G for God etc.. And then place them as described in these chapters. There's an afternoon assignment for you.

Our subject in this sermon is, what is the meaning of the words in 5:12: *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!"*

I. THE CONTEXT

We begin by looking at the context of 5:12, which will be our subject. We begin in verse 1:

1 And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

2 Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?"

3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.

4 So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.

It is my view that this seven-sealed-book is what we have in Revelation 6-19. We find the first 6 seals opened in chapters 6-7. Chapter 8 and on deals with the seventh seal. In my understanding, if no one had been found worthy to open this book, we would not have a completed last chapter to the Bible. Chapters 6-22 would be missing. It is also sad that this book, which reveals so much of the future, is probably among one of the least preached books.

Verse 5:

5 But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."

When Jacob blessed the twelve tribes of Israel in Genesis 49 he said in verse 9:

9 Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him?

Here we have a prophecy to Jesus Christ, the lion of the tribe of Judah. Jesus Christ is the central figure of this book and of the Bible.

Verse 6:

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.

Here we have the lion turned lamb. It refers to the same Person. It is Jesus Christ.

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

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."

Jesus Christ was found worthy to open the scroll, and the seals, so the whole thing might be revealed. The reason He was found worthy is because He redeemed His people by His own blood, and He redeemed them out of every tongue and people and nation. We see this today. I do not know if there is one country where there are no believers.

Verse 11:

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,

Now if you draw out this scene you have God in the middle on the throne. You have the living creatures around the throne. You have the twenty-four elders, which I believe are of the Church age around the throne. And around that you have angels without number. So, if you drew those angels with an A, you would be drawing A's for a long, long time.

Now we come to our text, verse 12:

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!"

We want to take some time with that verse. We go on to verse 13:

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.

So, verse 12 says Jesus Christ is worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing!

Now just look back at 4:11. It says:

11 "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."

Jesus Christ created all things! He is worthy to receive glory and honor and power. Then everything exists by His will. Think of it; you exist by His will! And by His will everything was created! Little wonder He is worthy to receive all these things.

II. THE TEXT

A. The Question

So, that, briefly, is the context of verse 12 and we'll read that verse once more:

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!"

Who is saying this? The living creatures, the 24 elders, and an untold number of angels! Now note carefully what they are saying by noting first what they are not saying. They are not saying Jesus Christ has power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing. It says He is worthy to receive those things. And we ask, from whom is He worthy to receive these things?

Look at the word "receive." It is a word that can mean "to receive" or "to take." How is it translated? All translations except the Message have it as "to receive." The Message translates it as "to take." The Message says:

12 ...*The slain Lamb is worthy! Take the power, the wealth, the wisdom, the strength! Take the honor, the glory, the blessing!*

It translates an infinitive as an imperative, which no other translation agrees with.

I think we can safely conclude that it must be translated "to receive." There are people who receive power or wealth etc... but they are not worthy of it. They may have swindled others, been crooked, and made great wealth in illegitimate ways and receive royal treatment, but they are not worthy to receive any of the things listed here. There is not one of those things mentioned here, when they are ascribed to Jesus Christ, that He is not worthy to receive!

But we are left with several big questions: From whom is He to receive these things? For example, power; is He not all powerful? Who can add to His power. From whom would He receive power? What about wisdom? Is He not all-wise? From whom then would He receive wisdom?

How do commentaries look at this? Did you ever have a question and you checked with some commentaries and they did not even talk about your question, and you are disappointed. Let me just give one brief example from Albert Barnes. Of the word "power" he says:

"To receive power. Power or authority to rule over all things." But my question was, from whom does He receive this power? And further, we might ask, is He not all powerful? Who will add to His power?

Well, we could go on like that with the rest of these things listed. But my question remained, if Jesus Christ is worthy to receive these things, from whom does He receive them? How about wisdom? We ask, is He not all-wise? How then can He receive wisdom? Who can give Him riches? Who can give Him strength? From whom can He receive these things? How and from whom can He receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing?

Now look at the verb "receive" again. It is active. When you give someone a gift and they receive it, they actively reach out and take it. Here Jesus Christ

actively reaches out and receives these things and the question is from whom does He receive them.

Now note who says this: It is many angels, the 24 elders, and the living creatures. They say Jesus Christ is worthy to receive these things.

B. The Answer

So, that is the question, but what is the answer to this question: From whom does Jesus Christ receive these things? I have pondered this verse for a long time and decided it was time to study it. Here is my answer: He receives these things from believers. If that is so, that now raises another question: How can believers give these things to Jesus Christ? Well, we'll look at each of these things He is given one by one and seek to answer how Christians give those things to Him.

C. The Details

1. Power

So, let us look at the details. First, Jesus Christ is worthy to receive power. As I see this, He is worthy to receive power from the believer. And how can the believer contribute power to Jesus Christ? I propose to you that this power does not have to do with God's ability to create and do all those things that do not have to do with people. With regard to that, He is all powerful.

The word translated power is a word you will be familiar with. It is *dunamis*. It is ability. So, when we enter the domain of mankind, does He have the ability to save all of mankind? No, He does not. He would have to force most to get saved, and He will never force anyone. He wants all to be saved but most won't be. Second Peter 3:9 says He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

So why does what God wants not happen? Well, it does not happen in part because believers do not do enough evangelizing. Jesus said believers should pray to the Lord of the harvest that He would send

forth reapers to the harvest. Man must obey God and pray in order for Him to send out workers. The Lord is limited by the failure of Christians to pray. That causes the Lord to be limited to where He can work. But if Christians pray and the Lord sends forth workers, now the message of the Gospel goes into new areas. When it does so, the people who hear the Gospel are given the choice to accept God's offer or reject it. Those who repent and believe first do so because they heard the Gospel. Many of those who hear reject the Gospel, but when they hear and then see godly Christians, they are drawn to the Gospel and they get saved. If these believers are godly, they contribute this power to the Lord. If they do not live godly, the Gospel loses its power.

You and I as believers can contribute to the Lord's power by praying. I believe in the power of prayer. I believe in the prayer meeting. We do not have to see many and great results, but we need to obey the Lord. We do not know what all God accomplishes by our prayers.

Then we can contribute to the Lord's power among people by being salt and light in the world. When Christians live in sin or even in a ho hum Christian life, they diminish the power of the Lord. When they become vibrant, live right, and seek to further the kingdom by prayer and godliness, they add to the power of God among people.

Do you know why most people who are in politics are in politics? They want the things that are listed here. When someone is running for the office of premier or prime minister, every vote they get gives them more power. Can you think of the power a Prime Minister would have if 100% of the people voted for him? Politicians cannot make themselves powerful if the people don't like them. They have to win others over to their cause and the more they win over, the greater their power becomes. But in politics very many who become powerful are not worthy to receive that power. The Lord Jesus is worthy to receive everything we can give.

But when the Lord gains adherents through repentance and faith, He becomes more powerful among people. This is the power He needs and can only get through other believers. You see, the more people a politician gains, the greater his power becomes. When there are many lively Christians in a community, there the Lord gains power among the people. And we can conclude that Jesus Christ is worthy to receive power. As a matter of fact, if the whole world was saved, Jesus Christ would be worthy of all it would bring Him!

2. Riches

The second thing He is worthy to receive from us is riches! Have you noticed that when some people gain power in politics, they soon get rich? But are they worthy of those riches? Look at the leader of our country, how rich has he become? We see this in many cases. And I ask you, are they worthy to receive all those riches?

But let me ask, what kind of riches does Jesus Christ get from believers? The greatest riches we can give Him is a godly life, and reaching the lost with the Gospel. We mentioned earlier that Jesus said, "Pray the Lord of the harvest that He might send forth reapers." Does that not indicate that somehow, He needs our obedience in prayer to send out missionaries? Every Wednesday when we meet here, we pray for our missionary, Wagdi. Oh, how we need to be reminded both to pray for workers in the field and to pray for the missionaries.

Listen to Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:18. He prays:

18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

Notice it is not the riches of the believer's inheritance in the Lord, but the riches of His inheritance in the saints. Here are the true riches He can receive from believers. What greater riches can Jesus receive than someone's soul in salvation?

We cannot measure what the value of one soul to God is. Jesus told the parable of the shepherd who had 100 sheep and he lost one. How great was the rejoicing when he found the lost one? What greater riches when the Lord gains the wholehearted commitment of some believer to His cause? What greater riches can He receive when a Bible teacher teaches, and the people turn from wrong to right living? How great are the riches He receives from those who get saved and those who bring others to the conformity of Jesus Christ? And Jesus Christ is worthy of all those riches.

Paul says he does not cease to pray for these Ephesian believers that they might know what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints are. Some day Jesus Christ will receive the riches of the glory that is produced for Him in the saints by other saints! Paul wants us to know this. And He is worthy to receive all the riches believers can bring to Him.

3. Wisdom

The third thing listed that Jesus Christ is worthy to receive is wisdom. Since He is all-wise, it cannot mean that wisdom can be added to Him, so how can He receive wisdom from believers? It would be my conclusion that He receives all that proceeds from man's wisdom. When non-believers become Christians, there are those that become very wise. Jesus Christ is worthy to receive all the wisdom that believers can muster for His kingdom.

You remember the wisdom of Solomon when two women came to him and they had both had babies and the one baby died. The mother of the baby that died exchanged the babies after her baby died and they took the case to Solomon and he said, "OK, we'll divide this living baby in half and give each woman half." Well, the woman, whose baby was alive was willing to give up her baby to the other woman rather than have it cut in half. Such is the wisdom of some men.

Now those who use the wisdom given them for the kingdom of God, give the use of their wisdom to the

Lord, and He is worthy to receive that wisdom. I might add, it is not only wisdom He is worthy to receive but anything else we have been enabled by Him to do.

4. Strength *Go over again

The fourth thing He is worthy to receive from us is strength! And here we ask, what is the difference between power and strength? In sports you can train for power or for strength and they can explain the difference. I am not sure their view of power and strength is correct biblically speaking, but it is true that there is a difference. I am also not sure if I have captured the difference correctly, but as I see it, power or *dunamis*, speaks of what one is able to do. Strength is *dunamis* in action. We had a visitor a while ago who said that when he was a young man, he could have a job driving a big hoe. So he was asked if he could drive such a machine and he said he could. But when he got into the machine, the man who hired him soon gave him a different job.

We read Ephesians 1:18 before of things Paul wanted the Ephesian believers to know. Verse 19 tells us of another thing he wants them to know. Paul goes on in his prayer like this:

19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power

He prays that the believers will know what the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe. The word "power" is "*dunamis*." Here is God's ability in believers. Then note, it is according to the working of His mighty power. The word "working" is *energeo*. It is energy. Jones says it is kinetic energy, it is power in action or motion.

The word translated "mighty" is *ischus*. That is the word used in our text. Maybe we could put it like this. *Dunamis* is ability. It is not doing something but the ability to do it. *Ischus* is this ability in

action. Maybe we could translate it as productive power instead of mighty power.

The word *ischus* of our text can refer to human strength. We are told to love the Lord our God with all our strength. That is the word *ischus*. I see it as power in action.

I think in Scripture the difference may be more that *dunamis* power is inherent ability, while *ischus* power is *dunamis* in action. We are to love the Lord our God with all our *ischus* power would then be our ability in action. And what the angels, the four creatures, and the 24 elders are saying in our verse is that the Lord Jesus is worthy to receive all our ability in action.

5. Honor

The fifth thing the Lamb of God is worthy to receive from us is honor. I have spoken a number of times about this word "honor." Does anyone remember what it means? It means to value. For example, we are to honor our parents. We are to value them. That does not mean we are to do everything they want us to do. It means that in the midst of not being able to do all they want, we treat them for who they are. We treat them as honorably as we can.

[[But with the Lord Jesus it is different. We are to honor Him, and there is nothing He wants from us that is not right. Everything He wants us to do is what we should honor Him in. He is worthy to receive all our honor.

In Revelation 4 no one was found worthy to open the scroll. Then the Lord Jesus was found and verses 7-9 says this:

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

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."

Why is He worthy to receive all our verse speaks of? He was slain for us! And he redeemed us to God by His blood, and He did this for every tribe, tongue, and people, and nation. No one is excluded. And He has made us kings and priests to our God, and we shall reign with Him, and this happens in the millennium. I have been amazed since preaching on the word *rest* in Hebrews 4-5 how many times the millennium is spoken of in the NT.

The Lord Jesus Christ deserves all the honor we give Him, and more than we give Him. He is worthy to receive this from us, and all of heaven tells us so.]]

6. Glory

The sixth thing the Lord Jesus is worthy to receive from us is glory! In the Catechism notes I said this of glory:

It is essential then that we understand what glory is. John Calvin has said, "The glory of God is when we know what He is." Another writer says that glory is the divinity manifest. Let me explain those statements. Glory is when you learn any positive quality about another person. Let us say you have just made something. It has turned out just beautiful. Now, whenever someone comes to see you say, "Come. I want to show you something." When they admire what you have made, that is glory. The thing made reveals something positive about you. When anything reveals some positive character of God to me that is glory. However, if I am the one who reveals some positive characteristic about God to another, now I am glorifying God. Let us say

someone you work with knows you profess to be a Christian. He has no use for Christianity. But when he observes your work and realizes you do your work well because of what you profess to be now he sees some positive characteristic of God and he will glorify God (See Matt. 5:16; 1 Cor. 10:31).

When my son-in-law and I went with Wagdi to Egypt to minister, I was teaching this part of the Catechism one day. And the wife of the man who was in charge of the Bible School came to me afterward, and I have never seen a face quite like that. It was like it shone. She was an older woman and it was like for the first time she understood the glory of God. She hardly knew how to express her gratitude for the understanding she gained that morning.

I might add a little to the explanation I gave of glory and say that the glory of God is that ecstatic feeling that wells up in us when we learn any characteristic of God. When we express that feeling, then we are glorifying God. In people, some characteristics do not evoke any ecstasy. Rather, they may bring shame to God. But even in people, when we learn some things about them it can raise these wonderful feelings.

But when we learn any characteristic of God, some attribute, it can but bring this sensation of ecstasy. One of the beatitudes of Matthew 5 says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." Does anybody know the promise that follows? It says, "For they shall be filled." Filled with what? Righteousness. But this blessedness comes after being poor in spirit, mourning, and becoming meek!

Now all of heaven says to us, "The Lamb is worthy of all the glory you and I can give Him!"

7. Blessing

The seventh and last thing He is worthy to receive from believers is blessing. Can the Lord Jesus receive blessing from us? Well, does not the Scripture say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all

that is within me bless His holy name"? Twenty times the OT says, "Bless the Lord," or "I will bless the Lord." Somebody tell me in which book we find that clause the most? It occurs 5 times outside of the Psalms and 15 times in the Psalms.

So, we ask, what does it mean to bless the Lord? Well, the word translated "to bless" here is *eulogia*. The *eu* at the beginning speaks of that which is well. It is attached to *logos*, which is a word. I interpret it to mean to speak well of. If we are going to bless God, we are going to speak well of Him to others. We might say something like this, "This week I got stuck. I didn't know how I'd get out. And the Lord took care of me there in that predicament." Or, "I had a burden last week and the Lord undertook for me." Or, "Listen to this verse that speaks about who God is."

When we learn some new thing about God, and then we share that with others, not only are we glorifying God but we are blessing Him as well. Listen to a few Psalms:

*Psalm 26:12 My foot stands in an even place; In the congregations I will **bless the LORD**.*

*Psalm 34:1 I will **bless the LORD** at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.*

*Psalm 103:1 **Bless the LORD**, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!*

When we say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul etc..." we are not blessing the Lord. We are instructing ourselves to do it. When we speak well of Him, we bless Him.

How often do we speak well of the Lord to others? There is nothing good we can say that He is not worthy of.

CONCL: So, in closing, let me read Revelation 5:11-14:

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.

Who is worthy to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing? From whom is He worthy to get this? In my view, from Christians. Who gets all this. It is the Lamb. And when we speak of Jesus as the Lamb, we are talking about Him as our Saviour, our Redeemer, the one whose blood was shed for us. Let us give all we can to Him in this new year.