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Sermon Notes

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## **The Lamb on the Cross Has Become the Lion on the Throne**

### **Revelation 5:1-14**

#### Introduction

Ordinarily on Easter Sunday, I love to imagine what it would have been there that incredible morning.

To be with Mary and the other women when they went to anoint the body of Jesus and found the stone rolled away

To run with Peter and John and investigate the evidence for the resurrection... the linen grave clothes like a cocoon where Jesus body used to be; the head cloth folded up by itself... the whole scene proclaiming in the loudest voice A RESURRECTION HAS OCCURRED HERE

Even better, the personal encounters... to be there when Jesus encountered Mary and she grasped onto Him as though she would never let Him go again

To be there on the road to Emmaus when the two disciples felt their hearts burning as the resurrected by disguised Christ opened the Scriptures to them and proved that the Christ had to suffer and die and rise again.... Or to sit at the meal table with them later on when their eyes were finally opened and they realized it was Him, and He immediately disappeared from their sight

To be in the upper room when Jesus came through the locked door and gave them many convincing proofs that He was alive

Or beside the Sea of Galilee when He cooked breakfast for them

To imagine what it would have been like to experience the most significant day in human history... the day Jesus rose from the dead

But I would like to bring you this morning not to any place on earth but to a place in heaven; not back in time but outside of time and perhaps forward in time

Why?

Because there is not a man, woman, or child here today who has a proper estimation of the GREATNESS of Christ, the GREATNESS of what He achieved, the GREATNESS

of the life He bought for us, the GREATNESS of the worship He deserves for it or the GREATNESS of the joy we will get in worshiping Him properly

Not one of us thinks TOO HIGHLY of these things... we all have this in common: we think too little of Christ and His resurrection... INFINITELY SO!!!

So I want to bring you not to a passage from the gospels in which the resurrection is described so vividly and powerfully...

Rather, I want you to follow the most amazing flight any prophet ever took... the flight in the Spirit by John the Apostle, who was in exile on the Island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea

***Revelation 4:1-2 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." <sup>2</sup> At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.***

I want to take you in your mind's eye to the heavenly court... to the throne of God Himself, and to the ultimate effects of Jesus' mighty victory over death at the cross and the empty tomb

I want you to WORSHIP the RISEN Christ by the same Spirit who led John through the clouds into the heavenly throne room

Context:

Revelation 4... a scene of surpassing greatness, of Almighty God, the Creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible, sitting on His throne...

Surrounding the throne are twenty-four other thrones, and elders sitting on them... there are also four living creatures... and these beings constantly worship God for His creation

Revelation 4: worship for God the Creator; Revelation 5: worship for Christ the Redeemer

This is the setting for the chapter we will look at today... Revelation 5

Four things focus our attention:

1) The scroll in the hand of God; 2) the proclamation of the angel about the scroll; 3) the Lamb receiving the scroll; 4) the honor and glory given by all creation to the Lamb because of it

## I. The Scroll: God's Plan for Redemption and Judgment for the Earth

### A. The Scroll Described

1. Greek: "biblos"... can be translated "book", but most likely a scroll rolled up

2. The Scroll was in the right hand of the one who sat on the throne
  - a. This is none other than God Almighty, God the Father, God the Creator of the ends of the earth
  - b. He sits on a throne proclaiming His absolute sovereignty over the events of heaven and earth
  - c. This Scroll must be a precious thing indeed, for it rests in the right hand of the eternal ruler of the universe
3. Written on both sides
  - a. It was revealed to John that the scroll had writing on BOTH SIDES
  - b. This implies a complete and total account... a full document
  - c. No room to add to it... and since it is almost certainly the writing of God, no room to take away from it
4. Sealed with Seven Seals
  - a. A seal implies ownership and authority
  - b. It forbids ANYONE who has not the right to break the seals
  - c. SEVEN seals: a complete sealing of the scroll... what is inside is a complete mystery
    - i) The number seven a number of completeness
    - ii) This scroll is COMPLETELY sealed... no one can pry up a corner of the scroll and see some of it
    - iii) Based on what happens in Revelation 6-8 when the seven seals are opened, the scroll is probably PROGRESSIVELY sealed... the scroll is rolled up some, and a seal is put on; then rolled up a little more, then sealed again; then rolled up a little more, then sealed again... until it has seven seals on it

## B. The Scroll Interpreted

1. What is this scroll? What is its significance?
2. God's Eternal Plan for the Redemption and Judgment of the Earth
  - a. This is the sovereign plan of God, written out in His hand before the creation of the world

- b. This is His predestined plan, the writing on both sides set, the ink is dry, the plan determined, BUT MYSTERIOUS to us
- c. As the seals are broken, the plan unfolds and becomes clearer and clearer
- d. Until the seals are broken, what's written in the scroll is mysterious
- e. Thus it is with God's sovereign plan, written in His scroll from the foundation of the world

***Deuteronomy 29:29 The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever***

## II. The Angel's Proclamation: Who is Worthy?

***Vs. 2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?"***

### A. The Nature of the Proclamation

1. This task was assigned to a "mighty angel"...noteworthy for immense power
2. The proclamation is made with a loud voice... so it can be heard across all creation... it is meant for everyone to hear
3. The proclamation is a question... perhaps even a challenge

### ***Who is worthy?***

In one version of the legend of King Arthur, there is a powerful sword, Excalibur, magically stuck in an anvil, and embedded in a boulder. On it is inscribed this caption:

"Who so Pulleth Out This Sword of this Stone and Anvil, is Rightwise Born King of All England."

It was a way of qualifying who had the right to rule... it could only be done by the true and future King of England. Many try to pull the sword out, but no one can. But one day, a young squire, helping his knight, Sir Kay, prepare for a jousting tournament, realized he had forgotten Sir Kay's sword... so he ran out looking for another sword Sir Kay could use; he found one sticking in a stone and, with no one watching, easily pulled it out; he ran and gave it to Sir Kay who recognized it immediately. He brought the young squire to the stone and had him put it back. When he did, Sir Kay could not pull it out. Neither could anyone else... but the young squire could. His name was Arthur.

But that is fantasy, myth, legend...

This is spiritual reality: whoever can take the scroll from the right hand of Him who sits on the throne achieves something far greater than we can possibly imagine... rightful King, not

only of England and not only for a few decades. No...the RIGHTFUL KING OF THE UNIVERSE, and for ALL ETERNITY!!!

## B. The Purposes of the Proclamation

1. To display the greatness of the task of opening the scroll
  - a. The taking of the scroll from the right hand of Him who sits on the throne implies the right to rule heaven and earth
  - b. The opening of the scroll seal by seal implies the right to govern the development of God's eternal plan of redemption and judgment for the whole earth
  - c. The rights and privileges of taking the scroll and opening it are greatly dramatized by the pomp and circumstance of the setting and the mighty angel's loud proclamation
2. To display the disqualification of all creation from the task
  - a. The silence and stillness of all creation testifies to another fact... NO ONE IS WORTHY to do this great task

***Revelation 5:3 But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it.***

- b. This includes every single human being that has ever lived
  - i) All the mightiest emperors: Alexander the Great, Caesar Augustus, Genghis Khan, Napoleon... all of them disqualified
  - ii) All the wisest philosophers: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Descartes... all of them disqualified
  - iii) All the greatest scientists and inventors: Archimedes, Pythagoras, DaVinci, Newton, Edison, Einstein... every last one of them are disqualified
  - iv) Even the humble unknowns, the hidden people of history, all of the common people, the humble and lowly, the meek and gentle... yet all of them disqualified
  - v) Even among the godliest believers in the Bible or church history: even Abel, Enoch, Job, Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, John the Baptist, the Apostles Peter and Paul, the holy martyrs whose blood was shed for God's Kingdom, the missionaries who left their homes and traveled to distant shores, whose loved ones died from

tropical fevers, whose own bodies broken out of love for the lost... yet all of them disqualified

vi) John himself, the godly apostle through whom this mighty Revelation came, he knows he does not deserve the honor... he is disqualified

vii) Let me get really personal: YOU and I are disqualified... we cannot stir, we cannot make a move, not one of us would dare to walk forward boldly

Why are we all disqualified? Why have we no right to take upon us the honor of advancing to the throne of God, and boldly taking from His right hand the seven-sealed scroll?

***Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God***

- c. Let me go further: even the Holy Angels, perfect beings who never sinned, yet from this honor they too are disqualified
- d. There is not a man, woman, child, angel, demon, living creature or being of any kind who steps forward at that moment to take this scroll
- e. Herein the entire human race finds its humility... we are simply NOT WORTHY to take the scroll and open it or look inside it

3. To heighten a sense of grief and anticipation

***Revelation 5:4 I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside.***

4. To display ultimately the greatness of Christ

- a. The angel's proclamation and the resulting unworthiness of the entire universe only heightens one thing... the infinite worthiness of Jesus Christ

***Revelation 5:5 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."***

A Lion who has triumphed you might imagine would have some great appearance, some terrifying display of dreadful, overwhelming power

But in John's vision, the Lion is a Lamb, and frankly that is what He is called again and again through the rest of the Book of Revelation

John's conquering hero is a Lamb... and He is a Lamb still

But first and foremost He was a Lamb on the cross

### III. A Lamb on the Cross

#### A. The Lamb Predestined

***Revelation 13:8 the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.***

1. Jesus Christ was chosen by God the Father before the creation of the world
2. The salvation plan was worked out before God said "Let there be light"
3. Thus the heavenly triumph at the completion of God's predestined plan

#### B. The Lamb Predicted

1. Having worked out the salvation plan before the world began, God wisely predicted the sacrifice of Christ for thousands of years before Christ was even born... through MANY PROPHECIES of ancient scripture
2. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah
  - a. Clear prophecy made centuries before Christ that the Messiah would descend from the Tribe of Judah, the son of Jacob, the Grandson of Abraham

***Genesis 49:9-10 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? <sup>10</sup> 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.***

- b. Jesus is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah
3. The Root of David

***Jeremiah 23:5-6 "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. <sup>6</sup> In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.***

4. God identified Him throughout history
  - a. Historically predictive prophecies: acted out in time
    - i) Most important: sacrificial system
    - ii) Over and over, sinners in Israel brought animals to the priests, who would lay their hands on the sacrifices and transfer their guilt
    - iii) The animal would then be sacrificed in the place of the sinner

b. Verbally predictive prophecies

***Isaiah 53:4-6 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. <sup>6</sup> We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.***

C. The Lamb Presented

1. Christ was born of the Virgin Mary
2. Grew up and lived away from public life until He was ready to be presented to Israel and to the world as the Messiah
3. This happened first at the Jordan River, where a prophet named John was baptizing huge crowds of people
4. John's statement presented Jesus to the world as the LAMB

***John 1:29-31 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ..."***

5. God then presented Christ to His enemies and to Himself for death

***Romans 3:23-25 God presented [Jesus] as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.***

God presented Christ to the world as the LAMB of GOD who was to take away the sins of the world

D. The Lamb Punished

1. Three phrases speak of the punishment of the Lamb

***Vs. 6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne***

***Vs. 9 "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God"***

***Vs. 12 In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"***

It's as though heaven can't ever stop thinking about the death, the bloody death of this Lamb

2. Here is the clear doctrine: the essence of Christ's Lamb-like behavior was that He allowed Himself to be slain
  - a. What a mystery!! Almighty God in the flesh, with more power in His hand than all the mightiest Emperors from all human history combined and multiplied by a million
  - b. YET He meekly submits to arrest, unjust trial, mocking, spitting, beatings, flogging, humiliation down the streets of Jerusalem, then hideously painful death by the cross in full view of the citizens of Israel
  - c. HOW COULD HE suspend His power so meekly??
  - d. HOW COULD HE behave so weakly?
  - e. HOW COULD HE just allow Him to mock Him while He suffered for others on the cross?
3. Why was He punished?

***Isaiah 53:5-7 He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. <sup>6</sup> We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.***

The Lamb on the cross was actually a **LION** on our behalf; Destroying sin, crushing death, tearing apart Satan's dark kingdom as a lion would rip apart his prey

Jesus was as savage as any lion has ever been... but He did it as meekly as a lamb

This was the Lamb's punishment... not for anything He'd done, but for things we'd done; for the sins of the world, for the wretchedness of all God's children who would believe in Him

#### E. The Lamb's Purchase

***Revelation 5:9 And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.***

1. This is the amazing purpose of the Lamb's self-sacrifice... to make an infinitely costly purchase
2. With his blood He purchased SINNERS... people like you and me; bought out of slavery by the payment of a blood price
3. They were purchased by the price of His blood
4. They were purchased FOR GOD... to be GOD'S OWN **POSSESSION**

5. They were purchased from all over the world

#### IV. A Lion on the Throne... But Still a Lamb

##### A. The Nature of the Lion

1. Everywhere throughout the Scripture, lions are portrayed as terrifying foes
2. They are utterly fearless, they are totally ferocious, they dominate everything that surrounds them
3. They advance, and never retreat; they tear their victims limb from limb
4. Their roar can be heard five miles away... they stalk their prey and cannot be deterred; when they are ready, they pounce on their helpless victims
5. Jesus Christ is called "The Lion of the Tribe of Judah"

##### B. The Triumph of the Lion

***Revelation 5:5 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."***

1. The triumph is declared... "He has triumphed!!!"
  - a. The word means "to conquer"... usually in military victory
  - b. A fierce adversary has been defeated, utterly vanquished, and the plunder is His to take
2. The triumph of Jesus is clear: He has EARNED the right to take the scroll with its seven seals
3. The triumph is nothing less than His victory at the cross...
  - a. Victory over Satan and His demonic forces
  - b. Victory over death and the grave

Jesus was like a lion against these deadly foes... tearing Satan's kingdom apart; ripping the grave limb from limb; roaring in victory as He died

***"It is finished!!!"***

That is the cry of the victor!!! The lion's great triumph!!!

The spoils of the victory are evident here:

***Revelation 5:7 He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.***

C. The Power of the Lion

***Revelation 5:6 He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.***

1. Seven horns:

- a. horns represent kingly power, the power to conquer and to rule
- b. "Seven" is the number of perfection, of divine completeness
- c. So this is a symbol of PERFECT POWER = **OMNIPOTENCE**

2. Seven eyes

- a. Eye is the lamp of the body... with it we gain our knowledge
- b. Seven eyes: PERFECT SIGHT = PERFECT KNOWLEDGE=  
**OMNISCIENCE**

3. Seven spirits sent out into all the earth

- a. By the Holy Spirit of God Christ extends His presence and His power everywhere, all over the entire globe
- b. This is the picture of PERFECT PRESENCE = **OMNIPRESENCE**

D. The Position of the Lion

- 1. Quite simply: Christ stands in the middle of the throne... again, a picture of Christ's deity

***Revelation 5:6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.***

- 2. Who can share the throne but God Himself?
- 3. But Christ shares the highest place with His heavenly Father
- 4. This image is strengthened later

***Vs. 13 "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"***

***Revelation 7:17 For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water.***

E. The Lasting Image: Lamb not Lion

1. This sermon is perhaps mistitled: Lamb on the Cross, Lion on the Throne
2. Fact is, Jesus is never again called a LION in the entire Book of Revelation!!
3. To His foes, Jesus is a terrifying LION, and He will destroy Satan's wicked kingdom until there is absolutely nothing left
4. BUT the Book of Revelation is written not to Jesus' enemies but to His children, His servants, those who love Him
5. Therefore to them He is repeatedly pictured as a LAMB: 29 more times
  - a. Again and again identified immediately with God on the throne

***Revelation 7:9-10*** *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. <sup>10</sup> And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."*

***Revelation 22:1-3*** *Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup> No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.*

- b. Even when doing terrifying things to His enemies

***Revelation 6:15-17*** *hen the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. <sup>16</sup> They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! <sup>17</sup> For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"*

Amazing!! The "wrath of the Lamb"... clearly terrifying to the enemies of God, but to US, the redeemed, Jesus is Lamb-like

Even in the Second Coming, Jesus is a terrifying enemy, but to His own people, a gentle Lamb

***Revelation 17:14*** *[The enemies of God] will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings-- and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."*

6. For His beloved people, Jesus is ALWAYS gentle like a lamb... tenderhearted and compassionate

## V. The Lion/Lamb Is Worthy of Universal and Eternal Worship

The taking of the scroll results in overwhelming worship for the Lion... the Lamb

### A. Worship: "You Are Worthy..."

**vs. 9 *And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals***

1. The central issue of worship is the WORTHINESS of the one we're worshipping
2. Jesus is absolutely WORTHY of our worship
3. He is the only one in history who was qualified to take the scroll from the right hand of God Almighty
4. When He took it, the worship poured forth

### B. Universal Worship

1. First, the four living creatures
2. Then the twenty-four elders... each of them holding harps for music and bowls full of incense wafting toward the Lamb
3. Then a hundred million angels surrounded the throne and took up the praise
4. Then EVERY CREATED THING in heaven and earth and under the earth, and in the sea took up the theme and joined in
5. This is universal worship, well-earned by Jesus Christ

### C. Worship Based on Christ's Accomplishment

***Vs. 9-10 And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. <sup>10</sup> You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."***

1. Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection victory is the greatest achievement in history
2. He was slain... and His blood is the most valuable precious commodity in the universe
3. Its power to cleanse is infinite... and by it a countless multitude from every tribe and nation was purchased to be God's own special possession

4. The power of Christ's ministry is infinite also because it changes forever our future
  - a. We were deserving of eternal torment in hell for our sins
  - b. Instead, he has made us to be a kingdom of priests for God
  - c. And we will reign on the New Earth... a beautiful realm of perfect nature, the eternal home of righteousness... we will rule like Kings and Queens under His perfect rule forever

#### D. Eternal Worship

***Revelation 5:13-14 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" <sup>14</sup> The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.***

It is our privilege to worship for all eternity... for Jesus, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Lamb of God whose blood atoned for our sins, is eternally worthy of our praise

## VI. Application

- A. Come to Christ... Know Him as LAMB so you need not fear Him as LION
  1. Full atonement for all sin is available in the death of Jesus Christ
  2. He is the Lamb of God, whose sin takes away the sin of the world
  3. His blood is infinitely precious
  4. His manner with repentant sinners is infinitely gentle
- B. Anticipate His Full Glory Being Revealed to You
  1. If you trust in Christ, you will someday be able to see what John experienced
  2. You will see the full glory of Christ
    - a. His immeasurable power and courage and authority as a LION
    - b. His infinite tenderness and gentleness as a LAMB
  3. You will have a sense of how much sin there was in your life and how much you needed the blood of Christ to be shed for you

4. You will fall down in His presence, and you will be overcome with emotion... with tears of joy and wonder streaming like rivers of life down your cheeks
  5. You will feel a burning ardor of love for Christ and admiration for Him inside you that will only grow and grow over time
  6. And you will WORSHIP Him forever
- C. Thank Him NOW for His Sacrificial Death and His Powerful Resurrection
1. For you He is a gentle Lamb
  2. For your great enemy death, He is a terrifying Lion
  3. Give Him thanks and praise!!