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## THE REVELATION OF JESUS AS LION & LAMB

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### Part 5 of Revelation

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Revelation 5:1-14 | October 19, 2003

Good evening. Welcome to Mars Hill. My name's Mark, and we're in Chapter 5 of the book of Revelation. Tonight we're continuing our study of the doctrine of worship. I want to encourage you to flip there and to get going with us.

As we've been studying the book, we've operated from the premise that every person who lives on the earth is a worshiper. That we find something that we believe is worth our attention, our money, our devotion, our passion. That thing – be it a person, an experience, a relationship, an object – inspires us, and then we respond to it by giving of ourselves.

The distinction is in Romans 1:25, that we worship either God who is the Creator, or we worship created things – things that God has made, and things that we have made. And as Christians, we are learning, as we study this book, that we are to worship God alone, though God certainly enables us and commands us, in fact, to enjoy creation.

So, we can eat, and drink, and kiss the beloved that we are in covenant with. We could wrestle with our kids. We could work on our golf game. We could play guitar. But what we do is not worship those things. We don't give ourselves totally to those things. Instead, we give ourselves in full devotion, complete devotion to God.

And so, I'm operating under the assumption that everyone in this room is a worshiper. And the most important thing for us is to get the object of our worship straight. Who is our God? That ultimately is what we're worshipping.

And as we go through the book of Revelation, what we continue to see is that it is, indeed, as Revelation 1:1 says, "The revelation of Jesus Christ." The entirety of the book is about us seeing Jesus. Being inspired by him. Adoring him. Loving him. Trusting him. Responding to him in ways that give him glory, and subsequently bring us joy.

And so, as you're here with us tonight, we're in this great, great, great book, and we'll start in Chapter 5, verse 1, and you're going to see two poetic images of Jesus tonight, as lion and lamb. And then you'll see a series of responses among God's people to this great, great experience that John, a disciple of Jesus, has while in Heaven.

And the last thing I will say is this, the reason we go through books of the Bible as a church is because I want to teach you the Scriptures. Not just what I'm thinking, what I'm going through, what I'm convicted about. But I want you to learn your Bible, and I want you to open your Bible, and I want you to see Jesus. I want you to be transformed by him, and then I want you to respond, as a people, with a lifestyle of worship and a corporate gathering as we come together of worship.

Here's what we see, Chapter 5, verse 1, "Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne, a scroll with writing on both sides, and sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?' But no one in Heaven," – the angels – "on earth" – men and women – "or under the earth" – those who had died – "could open the scroll or even look inside it. I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside."

The first thing we get this picture of is that God the Father is seated on a throne, and that in his hand is a scroll. If we were in the 1st century, this would make a lot more sense to us. We wouldn't have a Bible in the present form that we do. The Bible, in fact, is a series of 66 books that have been put together in one book as a library.

What you're really holding is a small library, written by roughly 40 authors, over 2,000 years, on a handful of continents, in three different languages. In the day in which this is being written, there is no printing press. This is before Johannes Gutenberg invented that machine about 500 years ago.

If we wanted to read the Bible, we have to pick up a scroll. When you hear the word "scroll," that's what they're talking about. Paul says in the New Testament to bring his parchments and his scrolls, to bring his books of the Bible and his other research and reading books that he enjoys for pleasure.

It tells us in Luke 4 that when Jesus began his public ministry, he opened the scroll of Isaiah. The way a scroll worked, it was one long, unfolding piece of paper – hadn't invented books, necessarily, the way we have them with pages.

And so, if it was Isaiah, it would be a really long scroll. If it was Jude, it would be a really little, short scroll. Little piece of parchment. And they would write on the front, and they would write on the back whatever it was that was the message. In this case, we're talking about books of the Bible. And

then they would roll them up, and they would seal them. And they were the rightful property of the owner.

Not everyone was literate. Not everyone had a scroll. It was a very sacred thing. It was oftentimes a very expensive thing to have copies of books. Here what we see is that the Scriptures come from the hand of the Father. God the Father sits on a throne, high and exalted in Heaven.

And the Scriptures come, literally, we are told here, from his right hand, his hand of authority and power. The Bible wasn't just written by the hands of men. It was written by the hand of God, through the hands of men.

At this church, we hold the Scriptures to be in the most sacred and highest place of authority. I don't know if it is possible for me to overstate and overstress how high we view the Scriptures.

I could still remember as a brand new Christian, going to a conference, teaching some pastors, and I was quoting verses, and one of the guys raised his hand, and he said, "Why do you keep quoting verses?" I said, "Because they're true and helpful."

(Laughter)

And he said, "Oh, well, you don't understand. Our tradition has a low view of Scripture." That was the first time I'd ever heard that – low view of Scripture. Low view? There's high view – and there's a low view? I didn't understand that. I didn't understand that at all.

I said, "Low view of Scripture – what does that mean?" He said, "We don't think that they're as authoritative and powerful as you do." "Oh, so you guys aren't Christians?" "No, we're Christians."

(Laughter)

"No, no, no. There's a part in there about hell. I know you don't believe that part, but you will. You need to read the book."

(Laughter)

We hold the Scriptures here in very, very, very high authority. Okay? Because they come (we see it right here) they come from the right hand of God. Some of you say, "I wish God would speak to me." He does – open your Bible. "I wish God would tell me what to do." He does – open your Bible. "I wish God would lead and direct and guide me." He does – open your Bible. You will get a message that comes directly from the right hand of the Father to you. Miraculous.

It was originally written down on a scroll. Now, the problem was, the Father has the scroll. He has the Bible in his hand – God the Father. It's filled with promises for you and me that God would love us, save us, heal us, redeem us, transform us, adopt us. That he would conquer enemies of Satan, sin, and death.

That he would be coming to execute all of these great promises on our behalf. The problem is, no one is worthy to open the scroll. No one is worthy to take the Scriptures from the hand of God and deliver them to the people of God. No one is worthy to work on God's behalf to execute all the promises that he has given us.

John sees this as a pastor. He knows the needs of people. And he's just devastated. He's emotionally distraught. This is a crisis. God has all of these desires, all of these intentions, all of these people that he wants to love, all of these promises that he has given, and there is no means of executing them on the earth.

That's where Isaiah tells us that God literally stretched out his hand to us in Jesus Christ. That's where this is going to go. The Bible means nothing apart from Jesus. You can read your Bible, you can study your Bible, you can know your Bible, but if you don't see that ultimately the whole thing is about Jesus coming to fulfill the promises, to love us, to redeem us, to save us, to make us a people, to connect us to God, then you miss the whole point of your Bible.

And this is where it's gonna go. The picture here is about Jesus – lion and lamb. That's what it is. The whole point of worship begins with open the Bible, see Jesus, respond to him. That's a good theologian, and that's a good Bible study, and that's a good Christian witness and lifestyle.

So, the first thing is, for worship to happen, the Bible has to be open. The second thing is, we gotta look for Jesus on every single page. Here's where they see him, beginning in verse 5. "Then one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep'" – it's a crisis, it's a problem, but that's okay. "'See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah'" – that's a quote from Genesis 49:9 about Jesus – "'the root of David'" – that's a quote from Isaiah 14:10 – "'has triumphed, and he is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.'"

The point is this, Jesus Christ alone fulfills the Scriptures. Jesus Christ alone fulfills the promises of God. Jesus Christ alone is the only one who is worthy to speak on behalf of the Father, to work on behalf of the Father, and to accomplish everything in human history that God the Father intended to occur. We desperately need Jesus.

And what John is saying is that if Jesus Christ did not take the Scriptures literally from the right hand of the Father and come in humility off of his throne as one of us in human history, we have a crisis. All of God's promises are thwarted and stalled because none of us is worthy to open the Bible and to execute the promises of God, and to make all of God's promises come to pass. We don't have that ability.

We need God. And God has sent Jesus. And I love the picture – the picture is that the Father is seated on the throne. The Scriptures are in his hand, and

that Jesus comes and literally takes the Scriptures from the hand of the Father and executes them on our behalf.

And he is portrayed here as a lion. Lions kill – that’s what they do. Fierce, ferocious, terrifying, strong – that’s why even throughout Scripture, when there are men that are warriors and they’re brave, they’re called lion hearted.

David’s men, we are told, had faces like lions. Here you’re gonna see this juxtaposition that Jesus is a triumphant, victorious, conquering lion, who defeated Satan, sin, and death. And humble, suffering, Lamb of God. Lion and lamb. He’s both. That’s why we need to see Jesus exalted, conquering, victorious, resurrected, ascended back into Heaven as a lion.

And we need to see him humble, incarnated as a man, on the earth, suffering and dying in our place as a lamb. The first picture is open your Bible. See Jesus with his conquering victory, defeating Satan, sin, and death for you.

The second thing is to see him as a lamb. It says in verse 6, “Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain” – bloodied, beaten, destroyed. It’s interesting, there are certain animals we love. There are certain animals we hate. Everyone loves lambs. When your kids can’t sleep at night, you say, “Oh, count sheep.” You don’t say, “Count lions,” ‘cause they’ll have nightmares and they’ll freak out and get on medication.

(Laughter)

Therapy’s really expensive, so you tell ‘em, “Count lambs.” Lambs are nice animals. We love those. Lions scare us a little bit. Throughout the Bible, the lamb is the most frequently mentioned animal. It’s mentioned over 200 times, over 150 times in the Old Testament. Just in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers alone, it’s mentioned 80 times.

Almost every time the lamb’s mentioned, what happens to the lamb?

Response: It died.

It gets killed. It gets murdered, slaughtered. Its blood comes flowing out of the temple, and there is literally a river of blood that flows out of the back side of the temple because the priest is in there slaying all of these innocent, small sheep – unnecessarily dying. They have done nothing to deserve this fate.

All of which is foreshadowing and leading into and pointing us to Jesus. When he shows up, his freaky cousin, John the Baptist, looks at him and says about Jesus, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” John knows that every animal that was slaughtered and sacrificed in the Old Testament was a foreshadowing and a type and a preparation that Jesus would come. That he would suffer unjustly. That he would be murdered. That he would die. That his blood would be shed so that we could be saved, because the wage for sin is always death.

We read that same thing in I Peter 1:19, where we are told that Jesus is a lamb without spot, wrinkle, or blemish – no sin in him whatsoever. And then in the book of Revelation, the lamb shows up 28 times. It comes repeatedly, showing that Jesus is the fulfillment of all of the Old Testament promises. You see, Jesus is a lion who conquers. How did he do that as a lamb who was slain? He dies – humbly, unjustly, betrayed by a friend, run through a series of false trials and murdered.

And it tells us in Isaiah that like a sheep going in for a shearing, he did not open his mouth, and he was silent. And here’s where he tells us a little more about this appearance of Jesus as lamb, verse 6, “Then I saw a Lamb looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne” – again, the throne shows up in 17 of the 22 chapters of Revelation. It’s the great centrality and the exaltation of God – “encircled by the four living creatures” – possibly angels – “and the elders” – the leaders of the Old and New Testament Church.

“He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth” – probably there it’s the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised that after he died, resurrected, ascended back, that he would send the Holy Spirit. He makes this promise in John 14 and 17, that Jesus Christ died for our sins, suffered unjustly.

Not only that, he rose, conquering Satan, sin, and death, triumphing as a lion. That he ascended back into Heaven. That there he’s seated on his throne, and he has sent out his Holy Spirit, the seven-fold Spirit into the earth. And you know that he has been at work in your life if you have ever been convicted of a sin.

You ever felt bad? That was the Holy Spirit. You ever seen Jesus as God? That was the Holy Spirit. You ever picked up the Bible and had it make sense? That was the Holy Spirit. Have you ever loved someone, have you ever served someone with an unselfish motive, simply because God loves them? That was the Holy Spirit.

Have you ever accomplished something in ministry? That was the work of the Holy Spirit. That the Holy Spirit has been sent out into the earth, and he’s working through and among and often in spite of the people of God, because Jesus Christ died for sin, returned back to his position of glory, and has sent the Spirit out to open our hearts and minds and eyes to see Jesus. To respond to him. To love him. And by grace, to be like him. That’s what God has done.

You see this great picture. It tells us then in verse 7 that, “He came” – that’s Jesus – “and he took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne” – thousands of years the Father had been sitting there with his hand up, holding the Scriptures.

“The people that I love, these people I’ve made. There’s people that have rebelled against me, sinned against me, run from me, hid from me, people that

have cursed me. People have violated everything that I have told them to do. People have ignored all my pleas and commands.

“There are other people that are trying to find me. Trying to be saved. Trying to get their act together. Trying to get their life together. Someone needs to take these promises and to bring them into human history and to execute them.”

And there's God the Father, seated on his throne. And there's God the Son, seated on his throne. And God the Son stands up and he walks to God the Father, and he takes the Scriptures from the hand of the Father, and he enters into human history, born of a virgin woman, in a dump, rural, hick town.

And he comes looking for you because the Father cares. And he's made a promise to you that he will love you and save you. He will forgive you. He will redeem you. He will renew you. You can belong to him, and he can belong to you. And you can be a child of God.

And the Son takes these series of promises from the Father, and here comes Jesus. The Father, we're told in John 4, is actively seeking worshipers. He's doing that through Jesus. Upon this great vision, John is in the throne room of Heaven. The Bible's open. Jesus is seen – lion and lamb. He's executing and fulfilling all the promises that have been given to God's people.

What happens then is a response – actually, a series of responses. This is where you come in as the people of God. It is important for us in church to first open the Bible. Secondly, to see Jesus for who he is and what he has done. But that is simply never sufficient.

It tells us in James that even the demons believe in God, and they shudder. You can open your Bible. You can believe theological truisms and facts. But at the end of the day, you have to love God and worship God and obey God for it to matter.

That the book is opened, that the truth is seen, but ultimately then, there has to be response. And that's what worship is. The worship pattern of Revelation is that God reveals himself, unveils himself in Jesus Christ, and that all of creation responds in adoration and action.

And then Jesus is revealed in a new way. Something else is learned about Jesus. And then we have new incentive and motivation to respond to him. And this is the cycle of your life. This will be the cycle of your eternal life. See Jesus in unveiled glory, learn something you didn't even know, respond, learn more, respond, learn more. You're never done learning about Jesus.

There's so much to your infinite, endless God. But, it's a continual process. And so, here are the responses of God's people. Beginning in verse 8, “When he had taken it” – when Jesus took the Scriptures from the hand of the father – “the 4 living creatures” – probably angels – “and the 24 elders” – we talked about it last week, the 12 tribes of Israel, the 12 disciples – “they fell down before the Lamb.”

When the Bible is open and you see Jesus, your initial response has to be humility, submission, repentance. It's bowing. We live in a culture that does not respect authority, that does not honor. We live in a world where no one bows. If we were in an Eastern culture, this would all make sense. In bowing, you are showing reverence. You're showing respect. You're showing a measure of kindness.

In our culture, we're an arrogant people. We don't bow. There used to be a day when you would stand in the presence of a lady, or when it was a teacher or a coach or a parent. You would at least speak to them in kindness. That you would reverence them. That you would in one way or another show that there was a deference and a respect.

And when God's people hear the Bible open, and they see Jesus Christ dying for their sins – past, present, and future – and they realize that he is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and that he has loved them, their first response must be humility. A bowing. A reverence. A respect.

Jesus Christ is most certainly your friend, but he is in no way your peer. He's your God. But he has humbled himself to extend the hand of friendship to you. And so, we praise him, and thank him for that, and we respond by extending our hand in friendship to him.

But that does not make him our peer. This is still God. And so bowing is appropriate. A posture of recognition of whom we stand before. It goes on to talk about other ways that they respond.

“When he had taken it” – verse 8 – “the 4 living creatures and the 24 elders fell down” – prostrate, bowing, humility – “before the Lamb” – before Jesus. “Each one had a harp” – now the instruments show up in Revelation. Some of you were raised in churches where they said instruments should never be used in church. They're gonna be bummed, if they get to Heaven, because there will be instruments. And these instruments are in Heaven because God made them and God put them there. You're looking at Heaven. How did the instruments get there? Obviously, God put them there. Nothing makes it to Heaven that God doesn't want there.

God creates instruments, and he places them in his presence. When you and I go to Heaven, there will be music. There will be musicians. Some of you are practicing for that great day when you will join that chorus. That's what you're doing. How come you and I love music so much? How many of you, it is hours that you spend listening to music? There's certain instruments that you love and adore and appreciate. It's because you're an image bearer of God.

God could choose anything for his presence. What did he choose? Music, instruments, color, lighting – a great band, a great room, a great concert. Why is it that the closest that we get as a culture to a worship experience is a great show? Because we're made in the image and likeness of God.

That's why we will spend enormous sums of money to go to a show. We will stand in line for hours. We will walk miles in the rain, so that we can come into the presence of one that we find worthy, so that we can raise our hands and sing and shout and appreciate the musicianship, the songwriting, the harmonies of those who perform.

And I'm not saying that's bad. All I'm saying is, ultimately, we are supposed to be preparing ourselves for the Kingdom, when we see the King, and we hear him as Zephaniah 3:17 says, "sing over us," and it'll be a great day. That's why you love music. That's why you love songwriting. That's why you love great musicians. That's why you have your favorite bands and your favorite songs.

And when you get to Heaven, you're going to be playing instruments. It's a very sacred thing. I would encourage you, be praying for all the musicians that play at this church. I don't know if you know, we have some great musicians – tremendous, really. People that we could never afford to pay, because they're far too good. But because they love Jesus, they come play.

We've got a brand new sound system that'll be going in here in the next – roughly about a month. You will hear the audio quality go completely off the charts, 'cause of someone who was real generous.

And I would pray for you, for those of you who are musicians, that God would enable you to play well. In the presence of God are instruments and musicians, and musicians who love him, and musicians who play well.

A few other things that are in the presence of God. "Each one had a harp, and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." This is my favorite imagery, and again, you'll need a poetic imagination to get your mind's eye around it. This is my favorite imagery of prayer in your whole Bible.

How many of you – it's not just color and lighting from Chapter 4 that matter, and it's not just acoustics and songwriting and instrumentation from Chapter 5 that matter. It's not just architecture that matters. What also matters to you is smell. All of your senses are very important to you. Your ears hear music. Your eyes see color. Your hands embrace. But it's your nose, that for good or bad –

(Laughter)

Makes some sort of discerning, understanding about the environment in which you are in. How many of you single women walk into the apartment that is dwelt by single men, and you know it.

(Laughter)

You walk in, [Sniff] nope, that's not good. That's all bad.

(Laughter)

How many of you men know when there's a woman in the room? You're watching TV, all of a sudden, [Sniff] "Hey."

(Laughter)

You can tell. Totally different fragrance enters into the room. How many of you men, when you're away on business, you close your eyes and you think about what it's like to smell your wife's hair? It's a sacred thing. Nothing smells quite like a baby.

(Laughter)

Good and bad, right?

(Laughter)

Good and bad. God cares about fragrance. God cares about scent. Why is it that we shower, bathe, use deodorant? If you don't, write it down, remember that.

(Laughter)

Why is it that we use cologne? Why do women wear perfume? Why is there potpourri? Why are there incense sticks? Why? Why is it that if I were God, and I was enthroned in Heaven, and I could pick anything, I would have my wife cooking bacon on the George Foreman Grill, and that would fill my presence?

(Laughter)

It's because certain smells make us happy. We love the smell. I do – I love the scent of bacon. I still contest that if they could find a way to create a bacon car air freshener –

(Laughter)

Every guy with a truck would be buying one.

(Laughter)

Nothing smells like bacon.

(Laughter)

Now, in the presence of God, however, there is beautiful fragrance. But the fragrance is what? It's your prayers. It's your prayers. Some of you wonder, "When I pray, does God hear? It seems like he's busy. Maybe his inbox is full. There's a lot of us, and we all seem to need things."

Or, maybe you're so deep into your sovereignty of God, that you wonder if God actually hears and answers prayer, because God is in such control that he doesn't hear your requests at all. It's a beautiful portrait here that God can have anything in his presence, and what he has is people, and music, and prayers.

What do you keep close to you? What do you keep close to you? I keep close to me those things that are most dear to me, those things that I care the most about – my wife, my kids, my Bible. That's pretty much my compass right there. God can have anything in his presence – anything and anyone. What is he gonna have? You, a great band, and your prayers. That's what's in the presence of God.

If you wonder if your prayers matter, your prayers do matter. The rest of the book is unfolding and showing how God is answering the prayers of his people. He does. God hears and answers prayer.

If you need something, you need to ask God. If you're struggling with something, you need to ask God. If you're glad, you need to thank God. If someone else is glad, you need to thank God. If someone else is struggling, you need to ask God. Whatever it is, you need to, by everything in prayer and supplication, make your request known to God, we're told.

And as you pray, something miraculous happens. You utter a request to God, and it ascends into his presence, and it's gathered up into an enormous golden bowl, and it's a sweet fragrance unto him. God answers your prayers, and when you get to Heaven, you will smell your prayer life. It's beautiful, really. It's beautiful.

A couple other things we see in the presence of God – how people respond. It says in verse 9, "They sang a new song." Man, when you see Jesus, you gotta pray. When you see Jesus, you gotta sing. How many of you like new songs? How many of you grew up in a church where all the songs were in a book, a little hymnal. That's it, done. No more new songs. They're all done. So sad.

(Laughter)

Some of you come to Mars Hill, you say, "I don't like it. I don't know the songs. They're new songs." New songs are good. Throughout the Bible we're told repeatedly – I've got this in the little appendix to the Revelation introduction I did for ya – we're repeatedly told, "Sing a new song to the Lord." Sing a new song. Songs come out of experiences. Songwriters – how many of you are songwriters? Right?

You have a sacred, important high calling from God. That's why as a culture we love songwriters. We just do. Songwriters speak best out of experience and passion and life. Here we see that as the angels and as people and as creation sees Jesus Christ and experiences him in his fullness and his glory, they respond with inspiration that compels them to write songs.

I told you last week that songwriting is one of the most elemental aspects to us being image bearers of God. Before sin entered the world, the only recorded words we have of our great father, Adam, is him singing a song to his wife on their wedding day. Singing opens the Bible. Singing concludes the Bible. And singing and songwriting is a thread that weaves the whole Bible together.

As you experience God, those of you who are songwriters, you need to articulate that in songwriting. As we experience God as a church, those of you who are songwriters must take our experiences and your experiences, and you need to put them to music, and you need to put them to poetry.

You need to, in some way, speak on our behalf so that we can sing with you. It's a very important thing. The Bible tells us in Colossians and Ephesians to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. We should sing from the book of Psalms, the response of God's people throughout history in Scripture, as they encounter God. We should.

We should sing hymns. We should sing songs that have been written through the course and the history of the Church. We're singing a lot of those today – oldies, classics. In addition, we should sing new songs because God was at work in the time of the Old and New Testament. God was at work in the history of the Church, and God is at work today. So they respond to him in song; they respond to him in song. We respond to him with new songs. Because God's at work today. And there's things to sing about today.

Songwriting is such an important thing. I want to thank, personally, all the musicians that have written songs for this church. I want to thank all of the people who contribute to Tim's whole department. It is such a privilege for us to have songs that are actually our own articulation of our experiences as a people with God.

We have over a hundred songs that have been written, recorded, and tabulated by people in this church. I hope and pray we have many, many more. And I hope that as a church, we always hold out the arts, and music in particular, as a high value, because it's in the presence of God, and it's important to him.

What a great pleasure it is to say new songs. How many of you, when your favorite band comes out with a new song, it's a big deal? It's a big deal. You stand outside of Tower Records 'til the stroke of midnight, so you can get the first copy of whatever it is that you love and enjoy.

Or you heard that your favorite band did a cover of some other band, and so you rip off a bootleg on the Internet, which is a sin.

(Laughter)

But you don't care because it's a new song. That's what we do. We love our songwriters. And your songwriters that you love, it's because they communicate from their heart something that has penetrated their soul, and is something that is intensely personal to them.

We've all got our favorite songwriters. I've got mine, you've got yours. Here's a few songs that they write and sing. There's 11 new songs at least in the book of Revelation, 3 of them are in Chapter 5 alone. We'll look at this first song.

"You are worthy" – the worthiness of God, the most important thing. Why do we worship Jesus? Because he's worthy. Why do we sing to him? Because he's worthy – "You are worthy to take the scroll, open its seals, fulfill the Bible" – why? – "Because you were slain, you were murdered, you died. And with your blood, you purchased" – bought back – "men from every tribe and language and people and nation."

Some of you have heard this so often that it doesn't mean anything any more. Jesus Christ died for your sins. I agree – check. No, Jesus Christ died for your sins. You're forgiven. You're loved. Not only that, you've been sinned against. Jesus died for those sins, too. Sins you've committed, sins that have been committed against you. Sins that have defiled others, sins that have defiled you. I John 1:9, "If we confess those sins, he's faithful and just. He'll forgive us for our sins and cleanse us from our unrighteousness."

We can fight over everything and anything. There's one problem in the world, one problem – sin. Everything else is a result of that one problem. Jesus Christ takes care of our one problem – sin. The wage for sin is death. We should die. We should be separated from God. We should suffer. We should be betrayed. We should be the one that's slaughtered. We should be the one that goes to hell. We should be the one who's an enemy of God. Don't have to be, though.

Jesus Christ came, and he stood in my place. He died for all my sins – past, present, and future. All the sins that have been committed against me, he has taken those away. He's done that through his blood. The great and eternal God, who sits high and exalted on a throne in Heaven, got off his throne, was born into human history, suffered, died, rose. Why? Because he wanted to purchase me. He wanted to buy me back from Satan, sin, and death, so that I could belong to him. He's done that for us.

Say, "Why worship Jesus?" I'll tell you this, if Jesus never answered a prayer, if he wasn't coming back, if he weren't gonna rise from the dead, if he didn't send the Holy Spirit to gift and enable you for ministry, if he never paid your bills, if he never healed your wounds, if he never encouraged your heart – if he just did one thing and died for your sins, that's enough. That's enough to worship him. Just in and of itself, that makes him worthy.

Now, he does everything and anything else, and that's all grace upon grace upon grace. But just the fact that Jesus died and I don't have to; and that he was punished, and I don't need to be punished; and that he stood in my place – that in and of itself, that's enough for me.

Not only that, though, it goes on to tell what this has done for us, then, in verse 10, "You have made them to be a kingdom of priests to serve our God." In the Old Testament, the priest was the high, sacred, holy, set-apart, special, religious vocation. You're a kingdom of priests. You belong to God.

And what a priest would do is they would mediate between God and people. They would bring the truth of God's word to teach people, and then they would take the needs of God's people in prayer – also, their sins to God. And in that way, a priest is a bridge between people and God, and Jesus is our high priest and our ultimate mediator.

But you and I not only belong to God, we're participants with God in his work on the earth. We have important things to do, and it feels like we're doing dishes, and it feels like we're going to school, and it feels like we're going to work, and it feels like we're raising kids, and it looks like we're talking to our neighbors at the mailbox, but really what we're doing is we're bridging God to people and people to God, in a very sacred thing as a priest – all the time.

Why worship Jesus? Well, he's worthy. He died for your sins. He loves you. He has purchased you. You belong to him. And he's given you a meaningful life, that even if the things you're doing seem meaningless, because you're doing them with and for Jesus, they're very, very meaningful.

Here's what else they sang about, "Then, I looked around" – verse 11 – "and I heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands and ten thousand upon ten thousand" – I went to public school; I'm not sure how many that is, but it sounds like a lot.

(Laughter)

That's a lot of angels. Angels, in Isaiah 6, they sing – that's what they do. "Day and night," it says; they never stop. And here, it starts with worship, and then the angels show up – boom – just explosion. Almost a seemingly infinite number of angels, and they sing.

"They encircle the throne" – there it is again – "and the living creatures and the elders, and in a loud voice" – when you sing today, you gotta sing in a loud voice. Here's what they sing, first thing – "Worthy is the Lamb" – Jesus Christ is worth my worship.

And it's important because we get our concept of worship from an old English word called *weorthscape*. It means that which is worthy. Worship is to give yourself to that which is worthy. There is nothing but Jesus that is worthy of your devotion in life, but it tells us repeatedly here, Jesus is worthy. He is worthy.

And here's what they say – "who was slain" – we're back to the death, the murder, the humiliation of Jesus. God demonstrates his love for us in this, while we were yet sinners, Jesus Christ died for us. You are a loved people. You are loved with a fierce and a reckless love. And because of Jesus' love demonstrated in his death, he is worthy of your adoration. He is worthy of your song. He is worthy of your life.

To receive what? Power. And wealth. And wisdom. And strength. And honor. And glory. And praise. We could sum it up and say, "Everything." You and I are created to give ourselves away. That's why if we don't worship Jesus, we will look for a mate. We will look for a family. We will look for a job. We will look for a cause. We will look for a movement. We'll look for a political candidate. We'll look for a sports team. We'll look for a band.

We'll look for something or someone to give ourselves to, and then we're perennially disappointed because it just wasn't worthy. And we give ourselves to Jesus, and he's worthy – of everything. After all, everything we have came from him in the first place. Like James says, "Every good and perfect gift comes from God." If you have power or wisdom, wealth, knowledge, honor – it came from him.

And it belongs to him. And it comes from him to you, and it goes back to him. That's your relationship with him. They sing a song about the worthiness of Jesus. The angels show up, and they sing, too. It continues to crescendo, "Then I heard every creature in Heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea and all that is in them" – everything. It tells us in Psalms, "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord." That's what it says.

You say, "Well, what kind of metaphor is that?" That's not a metaphor. That's a fact. You ever watch a good Disney movie? All the animals sing.

(Laughter)

It's biblical. That's biblical. All the animals sing. Now, some people say, "Well, do animals go to Heaven? I don't know. There are animals in Heaven. Whether or not your pet goes to Heaven, I don't know. I don't know. I know there will be animals in Heaven. It says that the lion will lay down with the lamb. It doesn't say there will be cats in heaven, just big cats.

(Laughter)

We know there'll be big cats. Little cats – probably not.

(Laughter)

There will be animals in Heaven, though. How many of you like animals? You do. How many of you would have one if they didn't go to the bathroom?

(Laughter)

I'm waiting for them to genetically engineer the dog that doesn't do that. 'Cause I see these guys walking around with dogs and little bags, and I'm thinking, "I'm not that guy."

(Laughter)

When we get to Heaven, though, there will be animals. And I'm assuming there won't be animal stuff. That's what I'm assuming. There'll be animals in Heaven. We love animals. We enjoy animals. Why? Why do people love bands? 'Cause God made 'em to. Why do people love color, lighting, design? 'Cause God made 'em to.

Why do people love bands and songwriting? Because God made 'em to. Why do people love harmonies? Because God made 'em to. Why do people love animals? 'Cause God made them to. And all of those things will be in the presence of God. And the animals will sing. The earth, creation, the animals – they are suffering because of human sin, and there's a curse on the whole world.

And Romans 8 says that creation is just yearning and straining, waiting for the final redemption at the end, so that it, too, can burst forth in song and worship its Creator. Creation exists to sing to Creator – everything. You've gotta use an imagination for this.

These are the parts of the Bible where the little kids are the only ones that truly get this. I tell this to my kids, "Well, all the monkeys, and all the cats, and the dogs, and the squirrels are all singing." My son, Zac, "Cool. Wow, that's great." You say that to a theological professor, he'll say, "Well, you know, I've never seen a singing monkey."

Well, that's 'cause you haven't been to Heaven yet. Wait 'til you get there; it's unbelievable.

(Laughter)

It's a great place. Everybody's a musician, and the bands always playing. The party's always going, and Jesus is always the one who is present, and we see him face-to-face. Everybody, everything sings. It's great. "To him who sits on the throne" – that's the Father – "and to the Lamb" – that's Jesus – "be praised." First thing is praise.

God, we thank you. For what? Do you have anything to thank God for? You know, as I've been reading this book, I have the most intense emotional response to this book, unlike any book I've ever studied. I end up crying like a newly crowned beauty queen as I'm reading it.

(Laughter)

And I just think, "Okay, praise. Okay, God, I should probably thank you for good things you've done." And then I start to think about what he's done. And I start thinking about, "Who would I be, and what would I be if he hadn't grabbed me and saved me from myself and died for my sins? And everything that I'm not, and everything that I am is something that I should praise him for."

Everything, everyone has a reason to thank God. It's part of your worship. Sometimes we ask God for things. Sometimes we thank him for things he's already given; praise, honor. We're dealing with God. As a father, with my children, I expect honor. I am their father. I adore them. I brought them into this world. I provide for them. I protect them. I care for them. I would do anything for them. What I expect in return is honor.

We live in a day where God is just not honored. It's like he gives suggestions instead of commands. It's like he's a peer instead of a Lord. One of the ways you worship God is praise, "Thank you." One of the ways you worship God is honor, respect, reverence.

In glory, this concept of weightiness, that God weighs most heavily. Some of you, what you do or don't do, what you say or don't say, it's because friends, family, culture, boss impinges on you. You feel a burden to be someone or do something. Glory is a weightiness where God weighs most heavily. That who God is and what God does and what God says – that's the most important thing, and it outweighs everything else.

And power. You and I will have power throughout the course of our life. Use it for good or evil. God will enable you with authority over people, as a friend, as a parent, as a confidant, as a co-worker, as an employer, as an employee. As a student, as a teacher, as a coach, as player – whatever it is, you're gonna have a certain measure of power. How you use that is part of your worship.

Do you use it to love and bless? To discourage and destroy? Power should be used so that people would see the love of Jesus Christ coming through us to them – as a priest who is bridging. This is forever and ever and ever and ever and ever. It's a lifestyle.

People who worship God have a habitual lifestyle of coming to Jesus, seeing him, confessing sin, accepting his death, responding to him with joy, renewal, transformation, gladness, song, creativity. And if you're a person that lives on this emotional trajectory where it's Sunday to Sunday, or event to event, or week to week, or high to high, you're missing the forever and ever and ever and ever.

The every morning, the every day see-Jesus, respond-to-him lifestyle worship. This is the point of the book where I'm supposed to whip you into an emotional frenzy. I'm supposed to scream and yell and jump up and down.

The book works that way here in Chapter 5. A handful of people worship, the angels show up, it gets bigger. All creation joins in. This is as big as it can possibly be. It's this emotional trajectory in the chapter that just culminates.

This evening, you're gonna worship Jesus. That's why we're here. And I want you to respond to him – not to my pleading, my begging, my screaming, my yelling, my threatening, my cajoling. I'm not gonna tell you that if you worship Jesus, 10,000 people will come to Christ. I'm not gonna tell you if you worship Jesus, \$10 million will land in your bank account.

I'm not gonna tell you, if you worship Jesus, all your ailments will go away. And all your fears will be relieved. And all your depression will be replaced with joy. What I will say is this, "Jesus is worthy, so we'll worship him." Whatever he does, that's his business.

And as we respond to him, it needs to be individually – you and Jesus. It needs to be corporately – us and Jesus. And it needs to be the sum total of who we are. We see that here, verse 14, on seeing Jesus – singing, celebrating, reflecting, pondering, remembering. The four living creatures said what? "Amen." That's a declaration of, "I agree."

I agree, Jesus is God. Jesus died for me and my stuff. Jesus didn't stay dead; he rose. He ascended into Heaven. He has gone to prepare a place for me. That he is here in this church and in this life with me; he is there in Heaven, exalted in glory.

He is a lamb who is meek and humble. He is a lion who is ferocious and has conquered my enemies of Satan, sin, and death. He is worthy of praise. He inspires creativity and joy, that all that I have and all that I am is from him and through him and to him. And I can't help myself because I've seen Jesus.

It says that at this, "the elders feel down and worshiped God." It's a physical, bodily posture. Your posture expresses your heart. I don't wanna tell you, "You gotta raise your hands in surrender, like a child reaching for it's father," but I'll tell you, "It's a great idea."

I won't tell you, "You have to kneel in humility," but I will tell you, "It's a great idea." I won't tell you that, "You should close your eyes so that you're not distracted by the room, and the band, so that you can just meditate on Jesus," but I will tell you, "It's a great idea."

I won't tell you to bow in humility and submission and surrender. But I'll tell you, "It's a great idea." We're gonna partake of communion, remembering Jesus' body and blood. I Corinthians 5:7 says that in that we're celebrating our Passover Lamb who was slain. We'll sing and respond to Jesus. We'll give him of our tithes and offerings, 'cause as the Scripture says here, it includes our wealth.

And as we enter into worship really now, it's about you. It truly is about you. It's about us at this point. Every week, my job is to unveil Jesus, show you Jesus. That's really the bottom line of what I do. It's his job to love you, heal you, save you, forgive you, convict you, change you. It really is.

And it's your duty to respond to him. This is the revelation of Jesus, adoration of Jesus, habitual pattern throughout the book. And so now, the way we set up our service is this – we unveil Jesus, and then you respond. And that's how we do church.

At many churches, they'll preach, close in prayer, send you home. No response. No repentance of sin, no prayer to send your sweet scent into the presence of God. No chance to sing and sing new songs. No chance to contemplate, meditate, clap your hands, shout, kneel, bow, cry, whatever it is you need to do.

We do this church service in this particular way to give you an opportunity as the people of God to respond to Jesus. And so now, that's what we do. And our goal is not to worry about our hands. Not to worry about our shouts. Not to worry about our band. Not to worry about our song. Not to

worry about our appearance. Not to worry about our voice, or to worry about our neighbor.

shame. He sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition," we are told, "so that you don't grow weary and lose heart," or in the words of Revelation, so you can keep doing this for ever and ever and ever.

Father God, we thank you so much that you reveal yourself to us. That we get to know you. We thank you that the Scriptures come from your right hand. That we are not left with the speculation of philosophers and religious leaders, but we have the very words of God – trustworthy and true.

Lord Jesus, we thank you so much for getting off of your exalted and eternal throne, for taking the Scriptures from the hand of the Father, for humbling yourself and coming into human history as a man, to be tempted. To be opposed. To be hated. To be despised. To be betrayed. To suffer. And to be murdered in our place.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, that today the tomb is quite empty. That when you said, "It is finished," it truly was. Thank you that the wage for sin is death, but that you died in our place. That makes you worthy. Thank you that as we repent tonight, you'll forgive us of anything and everything, and turn us from sinners to worshippers.

Lord Jesus, thank you so much. You've ascended back into Heaven, and not only do you sit there, but you have promised us that you're preparing a place for us. All of these great visions that we read of in Revelation, we look forward to the day, as I Corinthians 13 says, that we shall see you face to face, and we will know you as we are fully known. That we will be with you, and we will stand where John has stood.

God, we long to be part of that great chorus with the angels and the animals and all of creation. We long to hear the harmonies of the angels. We long to hear the musicians who skillfully play in your presence. We long to hear all of the new songs that are being written, by all of the people whose love for you has come to full fruition.

God, we come here tonight to be with you. We thank you for being here. Holy Spirit, we thank you for being a perfect seven-fold Spirit that has been sent out into the earth to seek and to save us. To open our hearts and minds and eyes. To give us a new song.

We thank you for taking the veil off our eyes tonight, so that we could see Jesus, and we could love him, and that we could sing to him with the angels. You are a great God. By grace, please make us a great people. Amen.